



POSITION STATEMENT

BREASTFEEDING

The American College of Nurse-Midwives promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding. Breastfeeding soon after birth may reduce the risk of maternal blood loss and enhance maternal-infant bonding. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months provides complete nutrition for growth and development, and ideally breastfeeding should continue throughout the first year of life. Breast milk contains specific immunological factors that cannot be duplicated in commercially prepared formulas, and that have been shown to enhance the infant's immune response and to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases. In addition, breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the risk of obesity, asthma, celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease and types I and II Diabetes later in childhood.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives recognizes that breastfeeding is a combination of learned behavior and instinctive behaviors of both mother and infant, and that the choice to breastfeed is affected by sociocultural factors, including attitudes of health care providers.

Therefore, the American College of Nurse-Midwives...

- Encourages comprehensive health education and social marketing efforts to inform and educate the public, health care providers and clients about breastfeeding as a normal process and the preferred method of infant feeding.
- Advocates for health care systems that provide timely and ongoing counseling and support for breastfeeding, and ensures that maternity/newborn facilities follow lactation-friendly policies.
- Promotes adoption of international, national, state, local and institutional policies that clearly support breastfeeding,
- Supports a program of research that seeks to further the understanding of the health benefits of breastfeeding, to identify social, cultural, economic and psychological factors that influence breastfeeding and to assess varying programs aimed to increase the incidence of breastfeeding mothers, both domestically and internationally.
- Promotes federal and state legislation that encourages supportive breastfeeding institutional policies, and insures optimal environmental conditions to facilitate breastfeeding in the workplace and school.
- Supports international efforts to promote and protect breastfeeding through policy, action programming and legislation.

Source: Division of Women's Health Policy and Leadership

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