



## **Kanesatake Health Center Inc. Baby-Friendly Policy**

*If a multinational company developed a product that was a nutritionally balanced and delicious food, a wonder drug that both prevented and treated disease, cost almost nothing to produce and could be delivered in quantities controlled by the consumers' needs, the very announcement of their find would send their shares rocketing to the top of the stock market. The scientists who developed the product would win prizes and the wealth and influence of everyone involved would increase dramatically. Women have been producing such a miraculous substance, breast-milk, since the beginning of human existence. ~Gabrielle Palmer*

*A baby nursing at a mother's breast...  
is an undeniable affirmation of our rootedness in nature. ~David Suzuki*

*"A community and nation that takes the responsibilities of breastfeeding seriously, that honours and respects the needs of the birthing women to have the time and support they need in order that breastfeeding is established, is a nation that cares about the long term health of its people." ~Carol Couchie, Excerpt from: NONASOWIN, Union of Ontario Indians, 1995*

### **Introduction**

The WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Initiative was established in 1991 to promote, protect, and support the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has been shown to improve the overall health of babies and their mother regardless of their social and economic background. Research has shown that it:

- reduces the risk of maternal type 2 diabetes;
- reduces the risk of hypertension in mothers and their children;
- protects against obesity;
- increases the psychological well-being of mothers;
- increases feelings of parental confidence and sense of empowerment;
- increases cognitive development in children.

Breastfeeding is deeply rooted in Mohawk tradition. However with the influence of baby formula marketing, feeding practices have changed in Kanesatake. The Kanesatake Health Center recognizes that breastfeeding is a natural method for feeding and nurturing an infant, and that breastfeeding provides numerous benefits to mother and child health. As such, all families have the right to clear, objective and complete information that is provided to parents at opportune moments.

## Objectives

1. Provide leadership for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.
2. Improve the health status of mothers and babies by increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration in the community of Kanesatake.
3. Support the implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative.

## Policy statement

The Kanesatake Health Center adopts the present breastfeeding policy which aims to:

- Provide a supportive and favourable environment to protect breastfeeding;
- Promote exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and then up to 2 years old or more as long as the mother and child desire to continue, by communicating to families all its benefits in order to make an informed choice;
- Support mothers who choose breastfeeding by helping them acquire skills and by offering resources from the Kanesatake Health Center and in the community that are necessary for successful breastfeeding;
- Support mothers who choose not to breastfeed by respecting their choice and teaching them safe artificial feeding and promoting natural nurturing (for example skin to skin contact, proximity and feeding on demand).

To apply this policy, the Kanesatake Health Center will:

- Implement the World Health Organisation and UNICEF's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding (appendix 1).
- Adhere to the World Health Organisation's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and its subsequent resolutions (appendix 2).

## Definitions

**Baby Friendly Initiative:** The Baby Friendly Initiative is an international program established by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF to promote, support and protect breastfeeding worldwide in hospital and in the community. Two evidence-based documents provide the foundation for the Baby Friendly Initiative: The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

**International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes:** The International Code was adopted by a resolution of the World Health Assembly (of which Canada is a member state) in 1981. The Code bans all promotion of formula and sets out requirements for labelling and information on infant feeding. Any activity that undermines breastfeeding also violates the aim and spirit of the code.

**Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration:** Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life for healthy term infants with continued breastfeeding for up to two years & beyond with the introduction of complementary foods at six months. (Health Canada 2004 - endorsed by Canadian Pediatric Society, Dietitians of Canada, College of Family Physicians of Canada, etc).

## Policy Review

Kanesatake Health Center's Board of Directors will revise the policy every 5 years.

## Appendix 1

### The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding

Every facility providing maternal health services and care for newborn infants should:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in the skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within half an hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they should be separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practise rooming-in - that is, allow mothers and infants to remain together - 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

Source: Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding: The Special Role of Maternity Services, a joint WHO/UNICEF statement published by the World Health Organization.

*Note:* Step #4 and #7 pertain to birthing units, however this information will be incorporated in all pre-natal teaching given from Kanestate Health Center.

## Appendix 2

### Summary of the International Code on Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes

1. No advertising of breast-milk substitutes to families.
2. No free samples or supplies in the health care system.
3. No promotion of products through health care facilities, including no free or low-cost formula.
4. No contact between marketing personnel and mothers.
5. No gifts or personal samples to health workers.
6. No words or pictures idealizing artificial feeding, including pictures of infants, on the labels or the product.
7. Information to health workers should be scientific and factual only.
8. All information on artificial feeding, including labels, should explain the benefits of breastfeeding and the costs and hazards associated with artificial feeding.
9. Unsuitable products should not be promoted for babies.
10. All products should be of high quality and take into account the climate and storage conditions of the country where they are used.

Source: <http://www.massbfc.org/formula/intcode.html>