



## Consensus Statement: **Breastfeeding**

**The New Zealand College of Midwives is committed to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.**

### **Rationale**

Breastfeeding is the biologically normal way of providing infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Breastfeeding is both a primary and a public health issue, as there are research based and well documented, short and long-term health and developmental advantages to the child, and health advantages for the mother.

### **Practice Notes**

#### **Midwives:**

- Are the health professionals with a primary role in supporting the initiation and the establishment of breastfeeding
- Are committed to the health and well-being of women and recognise that breastfeeding has health benefits for women (1)
- Are committed to the health and well-being of infants, and recognise that evidence-based research confirms human milk is the optimum food for human infants, and that breastfeeding provides immune system support and modulation to promote healthy growth and development of infants and young children (2)(3)
- Recognise the significant contribution that women, breastfeeding and breast milk make to a country's economy and the associated cost savings in health (4)(5)(6)(7)
- Have a responsibility to provide evidence-based research and culturally appropriate information about breastfeeding that supports women to develop and maintain the art of successful breastfeeding
- Have a responsibility to provide evidence-based research and culturally appropriate information about infant feeding to women during pregnancy and the postpartum period
- Have a responsibility to protect and support the breastfeeding woman and her infant
- Recognise that optimal infant and young child feeding includes immediate and continued skin-to-skin contact between mother and infant and early initiation of breastfeeding (8)(9)
- Support the World Health Organisation recommendation that babies should be exclusively

breastfed until six months of age and thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond (10)(11)

- Support the principles of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) (12)(13)
- Support the principles of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent, relevant World Health Assembly resolutions (14)(15)(16)

### Definitions of breastfeeding (NZ Ministry of Health)

- **Exclusive breastfeeding:** The infant has never, to the mother's knowledge, had any water, formula or other liquid or solid food. Only breast milk, from the breast or expressed, and prescribed\* medicines have been given from birth.  
\*Prescribed as per the Medicines Act 1981
- **Fully breastfeeding:** The infant has taken breast milk only, no other liquids or solids except a minimal amount of water or prescribed medicines, in the past 48 hours.
- **Partial breastfeeding:** The infant has taken some breast milk and some infant formula or other solid food in the past 48 hours.
- **Artificial feeding:** The infant has had no breast milk but has had alternative liquid such as infant formula with or without food in the past 48 hours.

**Source: Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Infants and Toddlers (Aged 0-2). A background paper. MOH. New Zealand. 2008.**

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### Ratification

*This statement was originally ratified at the NZCOM AGM July 2002*

*References updated: 2002,2009,2015,*

*Reviewed and References Updated July 2016*

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation.

The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice.

All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.