

Nurse-led Information Programs Significantly Improve Breastfeeding Outcomes for

Mothers After Childbirth

Sania Steward

Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing

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Dr. D. Blankenship

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Breast milk is the most nutritious option for infants, adapting to the child's development by providing antibodies and vitamins (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2025a). Breastfeeding benefits both mothers and infants by promoting infant weight gain and facilitating maternal postpartum recovery (Coffman, 2019). According to the CDC (2025b), in 2022, 47.6% infants were exclusively breastfed for 3 months, and those who were exclusively breastfed through 6 months were 27.9%. Although human milk is the most ideal method for newborns, some obstacles could hinder a mother's milk supply, including latching and lactation issues (CDC, 2025b). Aside from the primary obstetric doctor who monitors pregnant women throughout labor and postpartum, nurses are the primary caregivers who are at the bedside for new mothers. A select group of nurses from a baby-friendly hospital initiative in Mississippi described how their knowledge of breastfeeding education increased patient satisfaction and enhanced health outcomes (Burnham et al., 2021). Nurses play a vital role in addressing challenges through education, early intervention, and ongoing bedside support. When women choose to breastfeed, they should not feel forced to do so; however, offering them information to make that decision for themselves is most advised. To keep a good milk supply, providing early breastfeeding support, education, and encouragement is crucial for stable milk production (Leeman et al., 2019). Nurse-led informational programs significantly improve breastfeeding outcomes for mothers after childbirth. Many hospitals have implemented structured initiatives designed to support breastfeeding through education and consistent nursing care. This topic is significant to nursing because it highlights how education and advocacy at the bedside directly influence maternal confidence and infant health outcomes.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative transforms standard maternity care into evidence-based, patient-centered practice that improves outcomes for both mother and child. It has become a widely used framework among hospitals to enhance emotional and physical support for expectant families. BFHI has been approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Fund (UNICEF) for promoting and honoring hospitals and birthing centers that provide the best care for breastfeeding babies. According to Baby-Friendly USA (2024), the ten successful steps to breastfeeding include evidence-based practices such as properly educating staff, developing policies, initiating breastfeeding as soon as possible, providing skin-to-skin contact, and keeping the mother and baby in the same room. These steps help strengthen the interpersonal relationship between a mother and her child, which induces the mother's milk supply. Through the BFHI, moms receive education about breastfeeding, care of a newborn, and confidence. Delaware hospitals that hold the BFHI include Beebe Healthcare, Milford Memorial Hospital, and Kent General Hospital, according to the Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware (n.d.). Beebe Healthcare offers perinatal education through numerous approaches. At Beebe, nurses lead prenatal breastfeeding classes and share postpartum education through pamphlets and one-on-one conversations (Beebe Healthcare, n.d.). Lactation consultants also run “Latch at Lunch” sessions and provide support during the hospital stays and follow-up visits (Beebe Healthcare, n.d.). Nurses provide adequate information and utilize evidence-based practice by referring to the Office on Women’s Health (Beebe Healthcare, 2021). Global organizations like the WHO and the UNICEF back these evidence-based practices by highlighting the importance of starting breastfeeding early and providing ongoing support.

Breast milk is the ideal source of nutrition for infants. It contains nutrients specifically tailored to a baby's needs and provides important immunological benefits. Breastfeeding has a

dual effect for both mom and baby. Breastfed babies are less likely to develop asthma, obesity, diabetes, necrotizing enterocolitis, or sudden infant death syndrome. “The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) recommend that breastfeeding be initiated within the first hour of birth and that infants remain exclusively breast milk fed for at least the first 6 months from birth” (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018, as cited in Mason et al., 2025, p. 210). When it comes to promoting effective breastfeeding, nurses play a crucial role. One of the most crucial things a bedside nurse can do is to educate and display breastfeeding support. Nurses provide inpatient care that requires frequent monitoring, assessment, and interventions for a laboring mom. This continues throughout labor, birth, recovery, and postpartum (Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, 2022, as cited in Mason et al., 2025). During this time, nurses provide expertise in breastfeeding education, proper latching techniques, positioning, and feeding cues. Their role also includes reassuring the mother during the early stage of lactation. Nursing support involves checking for nipple pain and encouraging skin-to-skin contact right after birth, which helps start milk production. By providing consistent education and support, nurses help mothers handle challenges and continue breastfeeding exclusively. However, this would not be possible if it were not for proper staffing, resources, and a desirable work environment. Hospitals that had more nurses available saw more mothers exclusively breastfeed their babies during their hospital stay compared to hospitals with fewer maternity nurses (Lyndon et al., 2022; Simpson et al., 2020, as cited in Mason et al., 2025). Adequate nurse staffing allows for each mother to receive the time, attention, and individualized care necessary for successful breastfeeding and positive patient experiences. Nurse-led programs such as the BFHI depend not just on support from institutions, but also on teamwork and ongoing learning to succeed over time.

Implementation of nurse-driven programs such as the BFHI requires dedication and collaborative care from health care providers, lactation consultants, and nurses. Comprehensive education forms the foundation of effective nursing practice. Nurses who remain informed about current research are better equipped to educate and support their patients with confidence. A nurse's role is crucial due to increased patient interactions (Burnham et al., 2021). Nurses from a BFHI in Mississippi thought education was of most importance for successful implementation of the BFHI (Burnham et al., 2021). Education is of the utmost importance when preparing women and their partners about perinatal care. Ensuring parents understand the education provided during their hospital stay allows for “[...]receptive breastfeeding, skin-to-skin care, rooming in, and restrictions on pacifier use” (Burnham et al., 2021, p. 396). These actions prepare parents for post-hospital bonding with their child. A nurse who is confident in training women to breastfeed allows them to provide a higher quality of care, compared to when they had not received additional training. Upon establishing a relationship and proper education about breastfeeding, women are more willing to engage in BFHI. However, it is important to allow mothers to make the decision on their own after informing them of the benefits of breastfeeding. Studying state and national breastfeeding trends provides additional context for the frequent difficulties mothers and nurses confront, even if education and assistance are essential.

According to the CDC's breastfeeding data in the United States, 85.7% of women who have given birth attempted to breastfeed their child, and approximately 40.8% of infants continued to breastfeed for 12 months or longer (CDC, 2025c). In Delaware, 44.7% of infants were exclusively breastfed for the first three months; however, the number has decreased to 24.0% by month 6 after birth, according to breastfeeding rates in 2022 (CDC, 2025c). These statistics show the continuous need for accessible education and follow-up programs that address

disparities and motivate long-term breastfeeding. Most literature encourages mothers to breastfeed their children until they are two years old. Barriers contribute to the decline of successful breastfeeding. Mothers who have critically ill newborns face a higher risk of breastfeeding complications. When a mother and baby are separated, milk production may be delayed. In the article, *Improving Access to Lactation Consultation and Early Breast Milk Use in the Newborn*, can affect future milk supply, making pumping feel discouraging, and lower a mother's confidence in caring for her baby during this important time (Leeman et al., 2019). Researchers found that early access and contact for lactation consultations were beneficial because they allowed for coordination through the nurse to determine the best time for a consultation (Leeman et al., 2019). Providing early lactation consultations plays a crucial role in supporting a mother's milk supply, such as promoting mothers to express breastmilk using pumps to establish and maintain milk supply. Supporting and engaging mothers is key to building a strong foundation for good nutrition and bonding in a baby's early development.

Breastfeeding remains the gold standard for infant nutrition, offering unmatched health benefits for both mothers and their babies. Studies show that nurse-led programs like the BFHI help improve breastfeeding success. By offering education, hands-on support, and caring guidance, nurses help mothers work through challenges such as poor latch, low milk supply, and anxiety about breastfeeding. Research demonstrates that when nurses receive proper training and support, exclusive breastfeeding rates go up, and patients feel more satisfied. These efforts not only improve physical health but also boost mothers' confidence, emotional well-being, and the bond with their babies. Nurse-led programs do more than improve breastfeeding outcomes. They strengthen the nurse's role as an educator, advocate, and essential partner in maternal and child

health. Through their expertise, empathy, and commitment to evidence-based care, nurses play an irreplaceable role in shaping healthier families and communities.

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