

University Health Care News

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University Hospital Becomes First ‘Baby Friendly’ Hospital in Utah and 73rd in U.S.

University Hospital recently became the first hospital in Utah and the 73rd in the nation to receive official designation as “Baby Friendly,” an international initiative sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The hospital is also one of five American academic medical centers to achieve designation. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative recognizes facilities around the world that have policies and practices in place enabling parents to make informed choices on feeding and caring for their babies.

“University Hospital made a commitment to this initiative four-and-a-half years ago because we believe breastfeeding and the natural bond between mother and child is best for both mom and baby,” said Karen Buchi, M.D., professor of pediatrics at the University of Utah School of Medicine and a leading Baby Friendly proponent at University Hospital. “Our pediatricians, family practice physicians, and nurses are fully behind the program and willing to offer support to all families who decide to breastfeed.”

To receive designation, a hospital must take specific steps to create the best possible environment for successful breastfeeding. Nurses in the well baby postpartum floors, Newborn ICU, and Labor and Delivery at University Hospital have worked to become experts in breastfeeding, and significant time is spent with new moms to encourage lactation in and out of the hospital.

Additionally, Baby Friendly hospitals must have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all healthcare staff. As part of the routine, staff must be trained in necessary skills to inform pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding and to help them initiate breastfeeding within an hour of birth.

Furthermore, although University Hospital staff and physicians fully respect a family’s decision on how to care for their babies, the hospital has elected to discourage formula and pacifier donations for new moms. Should a family decide against breastfeeding, however, nurses and staff will help facilitate those requests by offering support and appropriate feeding necessities.

“The Baby Friendly designation is a milestone for University Hospital,” said Margaret Pearce, R.N., Ph.D., chief nursing officer for University of Utah Hospitals & Clinics. “We are very proud of the hard work that went into this accomplishment, and we are thrilled to offer our new moms the support and resources they need to give their babies a healthy, loving start in life.”

University Health Care experts believe breastfeeding is important because there is evidence suggesting that the sooner mom and baby start breastfeeding, the longer mom will maintain it after leaving the hospital. Also, breastfed babies are known to have fewer ear infections and fewer problems with food allergies, especially those with a family history of allergies. Breastfeeding also promotes healthier brain development.

For more information on the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, the health and economic benefits of breastfeeding, or the 10 steps University Hospital accomplished to become Baby Friendly, please visit the Baby-Friendly USA Web site at www.babyfriendlyusa.org. University Hospital plans to formally celebrate its accomplishment at a later date, near the beginning of January.

Note to Spanish-speaking media: A Spanish-speaking expert on the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative is available for interviews. Contact the Office of Public Affairs for more information.

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