

What Women Want

Jglover@shaw.ca

Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding

(WHA55 A55/15, para 10):

- Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; it is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers. As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed(1) for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health(2). 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. Exclusive breastfeeding from birth is possible except for a few medical conditions, and unrestricted exclusive breastfeeding results in ample milk production

Breastfeeding in Canada & Alberta

- Canada (Chalmers et al, 2008)
 - 90.6% initiation
 - 16.1% exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months
 - 59.7% any breastfeeding at 6 months
- Alberta Breastfeeding Committee
 - Regional data collection
- Alberta 2004 (Yang et al 2004)
 - 85.6% initiation
 - 37.2% any breastfeeding at 6 months
 - Weaned due to insufficient milk production weeks 1-12, infant weaning self at after 3 months

- Many women plan to breastfeed their babies.
- Evidence to support the importance of getting breastfeeding off to a good start.
- Health care professionals play an important role with early breastfeeding experiences.
- What is it that mothers want & need to get breastfeeding off to a good start?

What Women Want

Take a journey – visualization

What did you identify

In small groups, develop a list of what women want and how health care professionals can support women to get breastfeeding off to a good start.

From the groups

- Thank-you for everyone participating in this exercise. I truly value your voices and commitment to breastfeeding families.
- The collective voices of women in the session generated a thoughtful and powerful list of what women want and need in the early post partum period. I have done little editing of the notes that were given to me from your discussions.
- Our job, as supporters of breastfeeding, is to spread the message of what women want and need to other health care professionals (hcp) so that all women get what they need to get breastfeeding off to a good start.

- To be present for my baby
- no separation
- No having to ask to pick my baby up
- To do what is right for my baby
- To give back to my husband the support he gives me
- To be alone with my family
- Respect
- Positive reinforcement
- Visual images of baby at the breast – seeing babies breastfeed

- Help now! – at night, in the day, in 5 minutes not next hour or next week
- Understanding of where I am at and matching me
- The appropriate information at the right time
- Research based information
- Being told I am doing well
- Listen
- Show me that you care and provide me with support – a care provider who understands what is important to me and willing to help me achieve my goals

- Teach me cues – show me do not just tell me
- Skilled support when there are problems
- Comfortable environment (home)
- Calm environment and calm caregivers
- Nonjudgemental attitude of family, friends and HCP
- Time to get to know baby – alone – with family
- Freedom – choices – success
- Let me know why, knowing it is ok, hcp doing the best for me and my baby

- Perspective – laugh – joy – play
- More information during pregnancy about breastfeeding
- Who to call for help
- No formula supplementation
- Be able to talk to someone who has walked the walk
- Time – hold space – be sensitive to what each woman wants – not everyone wants the same
- Treat me as an individual
- Being able to trust the health care professionals

- To be listened to
- Encouragement
 - Someone to tell me that I am doing a good job
 - Support of family and friends
- Knowing what is normal so I know what to expect
- Where to go to get help
- Knowledgeable health care professionals
- I want to do the right thing for my baby

From the literature

- Women want to be valued (Larsen et al 2008)
 - Hear her stories
 - Listen to her
 - Acknowledge difficulties & frustrations
- Hands-off care – if hands-on assistance is needed do so with consent only (Inch et al 2003; Weimers et al 2006)

From the literature

- Breastfeeding is associated with confidence and self-efficacy (Blyth et al 2002)
 - Believe that breastfeeding is important and she can do it
- Confidence is supported by:
 - Consistent advice (McInnes & Chalmers, 2008)
 - Continuity of care (Ekstrom & Widstrom, 2006)
- Concrete support with household responsibilities so she can be supported to be with her baby

From the literature

- Keep mothers and babies together (Moore & Anderson, 2007)
- Best practice based on evidence
 - Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (Kramer et al 2001; Decker et al 2009)
- Family-centered care
 - Families in collaboration with HCP
 - Self management a contributor to breastfeeding outcomes - self management as defined as a women's perception of their ability to manage and be actively involved in decision making (McKean et al 2005; Huber et al 2007)

What women want

“breastfeeding is an intimate dance choreographed by nature and culture that has been performed through the ages and is vital to the optimum health and well being of the mother and baby.”

(Stuart-Macadam & Dettwyler, 1995)

Our job is to create the cultural conditions where nature's choreography is supported.

Alberta Breastfeeding Charter

1. Implement the Global Strategy for Infant & Young Children Breastfeeding
2. Implement best practices in health services across Alberta (Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative)
3. Ensure education in human lactation and breastfeeding as a pre-requisite for all health care professionals working in maternity and childcare
4. Work with employers to create a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers
5. Develop policy & practice to support breastfeeding in public places
6. Include human lactation in the education curriculum
7. Adopt the WHO International Code of marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes & subsequent WHA resolutions

References

- This is not an exhaustive list of all the literature that addresses women's experiences with breastfeeding.
- Thurler and Mercer reviewed many studies that were found by using the search terms breastfeeding, duration and variables. They identified 4 categories of variables (biology, demographic, social and psychological variables). This is primarily a review of studies pertaining to women in western countries

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