



News Release

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Breastfeeding-friendly hospitals help create “Healthiest Next Generation”

Voluntary program recognizes hospitals that support breastfeeding

OLYMPIA — Breastfeeding can give babies a healthy start in life. Hospitals play an important role in helping mothers start and continue breastfeeding. A new state program, Breastfeeding Friendly Washington Hospitals, recognizes hospitals that are taking steps to support breastfeeding.

“We know that babies are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives if they breastfeed for at least six months,” said state Secretary of Health John Wiesman. “Hospitals that encourage and support breastfeeding are helping to raise the healthiest next generation.

Expectant parents will soon have an easier time finding out how breastfeeding-friendly their local hospital is thanks to the Breastfeeding-Friendly Hospitals program.”

The program — a partnership between the Washington State Hospital Association and the state Department of Health — launched August 3rd.

“Washington state hospitals and health systems have long supported breastfeeding as a way to help a new baby begin a healthy life,” said Cassie Sauer, Washington State Hospital Association. “We supported the 2014 legislation that would have created the ‘Baby Friendly’ designation, and when it didn’t go through, we committed to working voluntarily to support the program.

Breastfeeding can be challenging, particularly at first. The information and support mothers and families receive in the hospital can be the difference in successful starts.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, breastfeeding for nine months reduces a baby’s risk of becoming overweight and the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). It also protects babies from illnesses such as diarrhea, ear infections, asthma, and pneumonia.

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Mothers who breastfeed also benefit through decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers, Type 2 diabetes, and post-partum depression.

The “Breastfeeding-Friendly Washington Hospitals” project is a voluntary recognition program that will acknowledge participating hospitals that complete steps to support breastfeeding. Three different levels of recognition can be achieved – Gold, Silver, and Bronze – depending on how many steps a facility completes.

Breastfeeding is a key element in Governor Jay Inslee’s Healthiest Next Generation Initiative to make the next generation of Washington children the healthiest ever. The goal is to help children maintain a healthy weight, enjoy active lives, and eat well in places where they spend the most time — including early learning settings, schools, and their communities.

[Hospitals will be recognized](#) on the Department of Health website and [#HealthiestNextGen](#).

Hospitals will also receive special decals to place in the facility’s windows to inform parents about their efforts. Facilities getting the gold recognition level will also receive a unique plaque.

More information on the [Breast Feeding Friendly Washington Hospitals](#) and the [Healthiest Next Generation Initiative](#) is available online, or follow [#HealthiestNextGen](#).

The [Department of Health website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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