



The Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative and the International MotherBaby Childbirth Initiative: Complementary Initiatives Fact Sheet

The WHO/UNICEF Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), launched in 1992, is a global effort developed by UNICEF and adopted by WHO to support the BFHI Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding-- practices that protect, promote and support breastfeeding for maternal and child health and survival and for the lifelong health and development of the child. The International MotherBaby Childbirth Initiative (IMBCI) is an evidence-based global effort developed in the early 2000s to:

- improve maternal care during birth in order to save lives and prevent harm from the overuse of obstetric technologies,
- promote care during labour and birth and breastfeeding that is centered on physiology and normalcy,
- emphasize a humanistic women- and family-centered approach and all types of care most conducive to good outcomes, including collaboration among involved professionals, midwifery knowledge and skills, hands-on support for the mother, and recognition of the MotherBaby continuum
- support the Ten Steps of the BFHI.

From 2003-2006, UNICEF/WHO collaborated in revising and updating the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative to make it more user-friendly and to include options for expanding beyond the maternity-based Ten Steps to include the mother, the community, and special issues such as HIV/AIDS. Among these options was the recommendation to add new Mother-Friendly criteria, based on the emerging IMBCI. These practices were included based on the evidence that such practices not only reduce labor and delivery risks, but also improve physiological readiness for breastfeeding. Recommended steps and self-appraisal and assessment questions are available throughout the 5 sections of the new BFHI materials. In this manner, BFHI has recognized that an evidence-based “mother-friendly” component is essential to achieve maternal-newborn goals.

The IMBCI should be viewed as complementary to BFHI. The first 9 steps of the IMBCI are based on the best available evidence on the safety and effectiveness of specific tests, treatments, and other interventions for mothers and babies. Step 10 of the IMBCI highlights the need for the Ten Steps of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative. Together, these complementary initiatives define the perinatal reproductive health care practices that are most likely to result in healthy and happy maternal and child outcomes.