

ALBERTA BREASTFEEDING CHARTER



Alberta
Breastfeeding
Committee



Implementing this Charter will help to:

- Reduce inequities in health
- Improve the health of families in Alberta
- Save money for all Albertans and the Alberta Government
- Ensure Canadian Governments fulfill their existing commitments to implement the WHO and UNICEF breastfeeding initiatives

Why does Alberta need a breastfeeding charter?

Guiding Principles

We are responsible for creating an environment where:

- Women feel enabled to initiate and continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish.
- Infant's and children's rights to mother's milk are protected. According to the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to breastmilk.¹
- Parents are supported to make informed decisions about feeding their children.
- Everyone is aware of the improved health and other outcomes associated with breastfeeding and the risks of not breastfeeding.



The evidence on cancer shows that sustained exclusive breastfeeding is protective for the mother as well as the child. This is the first major report to specifically recommend breastfeeding to prevent breast cancer in mothers and to prevent overweight and obesity in children. The AICR has made breastfeeding one of its "Ten Recommendations to Prevent Cancer".²

American Institute for Cancer Research, 2007

Background

In Alberta many mothers stop breastfeeding before they want to.³ This causes disappointment for the mothers and health risks for both infants and their mothers.

Evidence based research demonstrates that NOT breastfeeding leads to sub-optimal health outcomes for mothers and children,^{4, 23} negatively impacts our environment, costs money, increases poverty, and decreases food security.⁵

Health Canada,⁶ the Canadian Pediatric Society, the Dietitians of Canada, and the World Health Organization (WHO)⁷ recommend that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding for 2 years and beyond. Yet only 19.7% of babies in Alberta are exclusively breastfed at 6 months.⁸



A newborn baby has only three demands. They are warmth in the arms of its mother, food from her breasts, and security in the knowledge of her presence. Breastfeeding satisfies all three.”⁹

Dr Grantly Dick-Read, 1954

“Not breastfeeding puts babies at increased risk for SIDS.”¹³

Vennemann MM, Bajanowski T, Jorch G, Mitchell EA, 2009



THE ACTION PLAN

1. Implement the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding.

We call on all governments to fully implement the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, which was developed by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to focus world attention on the impact that feeding practices have on the health and survival of children.



“Breastfeeding is the biological norm for mothers and babies. It is a relationship that provides stress reducing hormones to the mother as well as stimulation, connection, and protection from illness to the baby. It even feeds the baby.”¹¹

Alice Martino Roddy

2. Implement best practice health services across Alberta.

We call on all maternity care providers and maternity hospitals across Alberta to implement UNICEF’s Baby-Friendly Initiative™ in hospital and community health settings in line with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada’s guidelines.¹⁰

3. Ensure education in human lactation and breastfeeding as a prerequisite for all health professionals working in maternal/child care.

Health professionals need to receive sufficient, current, evidence-based education to enable them to provide parents with accurate information and appropriate practical and emotional support. Staffing levels must be adequate to enable health professionals to provide effective care with adequate follow-up as needed by families.

“Encourage breastfeeding because evidence suggests the longer a baby is nourished by breastmilk alone, the lower the risk of developing obesity in childhood.”¹²

The Canadian Institute for Health Information 2004.



THE ACTION PLAN

4. Work with employers to create a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers.

Returning to paid employment is one of the most common reasons mothers with babies over six weeks of age stop breastfeeding prematurely. We call on the provincial and federal governments to legislate for breastfeeding breaks for women at work, in line with International Labour Organization Guidelines 14, 15 and the 2006 Federal Labour Standards Review 16.



“Breastfeeding plays an important role in the achievement of the child’s right to the highest attainable standard of health.”¹⁷

Article 24, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

“A baby nursing at a mother’s breast...is an undeniable affirmation of our rootedness in nature.”

Dr. David Suzuki, 1992

5. Develop policy and practice to support breastfeeding in public places.

The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act protects women’s rights to breastfeed in public places. We call on the government to initiate and support strategies that increase public awareness and social acceptance of breastfeeding.

6. Include human lactation in the education curriculum.

We call on the government to ensure that breastfeeding is included in the education curriculum at both the elementary and secondary school levels to enable young people to grow up with an understanding of the important health outcomes of breastfeeding and the risks of not breastfeeding. The education materials must be current and free from commercial influence and need to be developed and reviewed by independent experts.

THE ACTION PLAN

7. Adopt the World Health Organization (WHO) International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions.

The marketing of formula, bottles and nipples has been shown to undermine breastfeeding and thus infant health. Therefore it is important that marketing is controlled to the standards set out in the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions.²⁰



"Breastfeeding is a natural safety net against the worst effects of poverty."¹⁸
James P. Grant, 1981

The one thing that has evolved with humans, to nourish humans, is breast milk. It is the ideal evolutionary model for what nourishment should be. It is a remarkable fluid."¹⁹

J. Bruce German, 2008

Implementing the Action Plan will achieve optimal health for all Albertans and save valuable health care dollars.

By each of us working within organizations or as individuals to implement the Action Plan, we will ensure that Alberta women irrespective of their socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds are empowered to breastfeed their children.



"As long as you can ~ breastfeed! And get that protection into your child."²¹
Dr. David Rose, 2007

"Breastfeeding is the natural and species-specific way to feed human infants and young children, therefore it does not require evidence to endorse it."²²
European Union Recommendations for Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2007

Go to: www.breastfeedingalberta.ca to obtain this document online, register your support or view the list of supporters.

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*“This Charter was prepared by the Alberta Breastfeeding Committee
and may be freely shared and used only within the scope of
the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes
and subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions.”*

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