

Breastfeeding Friendly Establishments



**Information booklet for establishments displaying
the “We are Breastfeeding Friendly” sticker**



Health
Central Coast
Local Health District

THE 'BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY ESTABLISHMENT' INFORMATION BOOKLET WAS PREPARED BY:

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The Central Coast Breastfeeding Promotion Committee was established in October 1996. Committee members from Central Coast Health represent:

Nutrition Services
Child and Family Health
Maternity Unit, Gosford Hospital
Children's Ward, Gosford Hospital
Health Promotion Unit
Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)

The aim of the committee is to work together to remove the barriers that prevent women from breastfeeding or result in early cessation of breastfeeding.

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Breastfeeding Friendly Establishments Resource Kit

Thank you for your interest in the *Breastfeeding Friendly Recognition Scheme*. This is an initiative of the Central Coast Breastfeeding Promotion Committee.

This Committee has representatives from Central Coast Local Health District and the Australian Breastfeeding Association. These organisations have come together to improve breastfeeding rates on the Central Coast.

One focus of the Committee's work is to promote positive attitudes towards breastfeeding in the community.

In an attempt to make women feel more comfortable about breastfeeding in public, Central Coast businesses and facilities are invited to display the **'We are Breastfeeding Friendly'** sticker. Businesses and facilities may include coffee shops, restaurants, service clubs, local council facilities, GP surgeries, cinemas and any other places where the management are supportive of women breastfeeding and where basic facilities are provided.

This scheme is different from baby care rooms/breastfeeding rooms such as those found in shopping centres – while these facilities provide a much needed personal space for women to breastfeed and tend to baby's needs, the *Breastfeeding Friendly Recognition Scheme* is about breastfeeding in public places. It's about fostering positive attitudes towards breastfeeding in public. So it compliments the baby change rooms and provides breastfeeding women with convenient choices.

When surveyed, breastfeeding women on the Central Coast gave their unanimous support for a *Breastfeeding Friendly Recognition Scheme*. The survey showed that many women were afraid to breastfeed in public and would value a recognition scheme to identify supportive establishments.

Businesses that are accepting of breastfeeding could naturally expect breastfeeding mothers to patronise their businesses thereby increasing clientele.

It is hoped that the project will have a significant impact on breastfeeding women's comfort in public and will subsequently increase the length of time women breastfeed their infants.

By displaying the 'We are Breastfeeding Friendly' sticker, you help increase access to places that support women breastfeeding on the Central Coast.

Criteria that **MUST** be met to display the 'Breastfeeding Friendly Establishment' sticker

To display the 'We are Breastfeeding Friendly' sticker, there is one essential criterion and a few desirable criteria.

- **Essential**

That staff and management are supportive of mothers who breastfeed on their premises.

- **Highly desirable**

A non smoking area
Comfortable seating

- **Desirable**

Room to manoeuvre prams, strollers etc

What does it mean to be supportive of mothers' who breastfeed on your premises?

- **Placing the stickers that you receive in a prominent position.**

The larger sticker is for inside your front window. The smaller sticker is for inside your establishment, in a position where patrons will see it. **Breastfeeding mums will be looking for these stickers.**

- **Making sure your staff are aware of, and supportive of the scheme.** Some staff may not be supportive or have different attitudes to your own. Ensure they read this kit and at all times, act courteously to breastfeeding mums.

- **Handling any complaints from customers**

Occasionally, other patrons may complain if a baby is being breastfed on your premises. Explain that you are a breastfeeding friendly establishment and the reasons why. Do not ask the breastfeeding mother to stop feeding or to leave. If the patron is still not happy, you may offer to reseat them – not the breastfeeding mother.

Background Information on the Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme



1. WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- **An opportunity to increase patronage** by mothers who are looking for a place where they can comfortably breastfeed their babies. A survey of breastfeeding women indicated that the convenience of breastfeeding is often a key deciding factor as to where women choose to do their shopping and business.
- **Promotion of your 'breastfeeding friendly' business/facility** through word of mouth and through information given to new mums via Central Coast Health (e.g. Maternity ward and Child Health clinics) and Australian Breastfeeding Association networks.
- **Support and acknowledgement from the broader community.**

There is broad support within the community for breastfeeding in public. A survey of 400 randomly selected people carried out in Hobart, Tasmania indicated that approximately 75% of the population already supports breastfeeding in public.

A survey of new mums to evaluate the scheme on the Central Coast showed the following:

- 82% had sighted the breastfeeding friendly sticker in one of the establishments. Almost half of these mothers were found to have breastfed in at least one breastfeeding friendly establishment on the Central Coast.
- 89% of mothers reported that the breastfeeding friendly scheme made them feel more comfortable about the thought and act of breastfeeding in public.



2. WHY THE FUSS OVER BREASTFEEDING?

- Breastfeeding is first on the list of 'Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents' emphasising the unequalled value of breastmilk as the sole food for infants for the first 6 months of life.
- We now have an extensive body of research that identifies a range of short and long-term benefits to children, adults and the community. The advantages of breastfeeding include:
 - Breastmilk strongly aids in the protection of babies from illnesses such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections.
 - Breastmilk needs no preparation; it's always ready, in the right amount and at the right temperature, and meets the baby's nutritional needs for the first 6 months of life.
 - Breastfed babies are more receptive to try solid foods as they have been exposed to a wide variety of flavours via mother's milk.
 - Breastfeeding is economical, saving about \$1400 over buying infant formula in only one year.
 - Mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast cancer, ovarian cancer and urinary tract infections.
 - Breastfed babies are less likely to develop certain chronic diseases including diabetes, coeliac disease and food allergies.
 - Breastfeeding is the most ecologically sound form of infant feeding. It decreases the pollution of air, water and land from the production of infant formula and its packaging.
 - Lower prevalence and duration of middle ear infections in breastfed babies.

Breastmilk enhances baby's health, growth and development



3. DON'T MOST MUMS ON THE CENTRAL COAST ALREADY BREASTFEED?

- Between 75% and 85% of women delivering at Gosford Hospital's Maternity Unit leave hospital breastfeeding. While the initiation rates are quite good, too many women stop breastfeeding in the period shortly after discharge.
- A study of breastfeeding rates at initial visit to a Child Health Clinic and again at approximately four months was completed by CCLHD Child Health Nurses. Overall, three-quarters of babies seen at Child Health clinics were being breastfed at the time of the first visit. By four months, this had dropped to half. This rate may have dropped even further by six months.



4. WHY AREN'T MUMS BREASTFEEDING FOR LONGER?

- We live in a culture where breastfeeding is undervalued and where alternative infant foods are widely promoted. Mothers commonly have little or no information about breastfeeding, little contact with women who successfully breastfeed and, often gain little support from close family and friends.
- More mothers are returning to the workforce while their infants are young, and too little assistance is available to help them to continue breastfeeding. This includes lack of on-site childcare, no nursing breaks for mothers or appropriate places to express and store breast milk. There are often no breastfeeding policies, paid maternity leave, or flexible working arrangements.
- Lack of knowledge, negative attitudes and beliefs (of mothers, their partners, other support people, health professionals and the general public) towards breastfeeding.
- Large advertising budgets for the promotion of infant formulas.
- **Lack of available facilities for breastfeeding in public places.**
- **Negative attitudes of some proprietors and their staff.**

- **Negative attitudes of some members of the community towards women breastfeeding in public. Surveys have shown that older people are less accepting of this practice than younger people.**
- Inappropriate advice, poor diagnosis and management of common breastfeeding problems by some health practitioners.



5. WHY THE NEED TO PROMOTE BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY ESTABLISHMENTS?

In a recent survey of breastfeeding mothers on the Central Coast it was found that many women felt anxious about feeding their babies in public areas. Many either breastfed their child in their car or hid away in baby change rooms.

Sadly, comments from some of the mothers surveyed included that they were “worried about abuse from strangers” or they “found people stared or made comment” if they breastfed their infants in public. The survey also found that a third of women reported difficulty in finding suitable places to breastfeed on the Coast.



6. WILL A STICKER APPEAL TO BREASTFEEDING MUMS?

In a survey conducted by CCLHD it was found that 97% of women felt a ‘Breastfeeding Welcome’ sticker would be beneficial to increasing their comfort related to breastfeeding in public places.

As a result of the survey, this kit and the “We are Breastfeeding Friendly” sticker have been developed and introduced on the Central Coast.

An Inspirational Story

Finally, let us leave you with an inspiring story – one that illustrates just what is possible when breastfeeding is valued by society and supported in very tangible ways.

This is the story of breastfeeding in Norway; where:

- Breastfeeding rates at three months are 80%.
- A year's maternity leave is granted at 80% of pay.
- Breastfeeding breaks for working mothers are the norm.
- There is a government that believes "mother's milk is the backbone of life" (maybe they are also smart enough to see that it makes good economic sense to keep babies healthier and out of the health system).
- A breastfeeding cabinet minister who breastfeeds whenever she needs to and doesn't raise an eyebrow.
- Over half of Norway's 60 maternity units have achieved Baby Friendly Status (only 3 in UK and likewise in Australia) with no improper promotion of formula milks.
- Breastfeeding women in Norway expect to breastfeed and expect to breastfeed in public – in shops, in restaurants, even in parliament.
- In short, through a concerted effort by an assertive association of lay women and a supportive government, breastfeeding has become the 'cultural norm' in Norway – something we can aspire to here.

The 'Breastfeeding Friendly' sticker is a small but important step in that direction.

Source: ABA

Did you know!

*In NSW it is illegal to discriminate against mothers who need to breastfeed their child in public.
By law they cannot be asked to leave or feed elsewhere.*



