

Learning outcomes for courses in breastfeeding management for student midwives and public health nurses

By the end of the course of study, students will:

1. Understand the importance of breastfeeding, and the consequences of not breastfeeding, in terms of health outcomes.
2. Have developed an in-depth knowledge of the physiology of lactation and be able to apply this in practical situations.
3. Be able to recognise effective positioning, attachment and suckling and to empower mothers to develop the skills necessary for them to achieve these for themselves.
4. Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the principles of hand expression and have the ability to assist mothers to acquire the skills of hand expression.
5. Understand the principle of demand feeding and be able to explain its importance in relation to the establishment and maintenance of lactation.
6. Understand the potential impact of delivery room practices, such as the effect of different pain relief methods and the importance of skin-to-skin contact, on the well-being of mother and baby, and on the establishment of breastfeeding in particular.
7. Understand the importance of enabling mother and baby to room-in together in the early postnatal period as a means of facilitating breastfeeding.
8. Be equipped to provide parents with accurate, evidence-based information about activities that may have an impact on breastfeeding, such as bed-sharing between parents and babies, and the use of dummies.
9. Know about the common complications of breastfeeding, how these arise, and how women may be helped to overcome them.
10. Understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and possess the knowledge and skills to enable mothers to achieve this.
11. Understand the limited number of situations in which exclusive breastfeeding is not possible and be able to support mothers in partial breastfeeding or artificial feeding in these circumstances.
12. Understand the importance of timely introduction of complementary foods and of continuing breastfeeding during the weaning period, into the second year of life and beyond.
13. Be able to support mothers who are separated from their babies (on admission to SCBU, when returning to work, etc) to initiate and/or maintain their lactation and to feed their babies optimally.
14. Be able to demonstrate knowledge of alternative methods of infant feeding and care which may be used where breastfeeding is not possible, and which will enhance the likelihood of a later transition to breastfeeding.
15. Understand the importance of community support for breastfeeding and demonstrate an awareness of the role of community-based support networks, both in supporting women to breastfeed and as a resource for health professionals.
16. Appreciate the main differences between the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and the relevant current Irish legislation, and understand the relevance of the Code to their own work situation.
17. Be thoroughly conversant with the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative best practice standards (i.e. the WHO/UNICEF Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the BFHI/HPH Ten Steps to a Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit).
18. Understand the rationale behind the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative best practice standards and what the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative seeks to achieve through them.
19. Be equipped to implement the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative best practice standards in their workplace, with appropriate support from colleagues.