

## Breastfeeding: The Role of the Primary Care Provider

Canada celebrates [Breastfeeding Week](#) annually from October 1 to 7. It is a great opportunity to reflect on how we can protect, promote, and support breastfeeding all year long. This year's theme is: **“Support breastfeeding for a healthier planet”**.

### Why is breastfeeding important for the planet's environment?

Protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding are ways we can contribute to a healthier planet and society. Human milk is:

- Made and transferred to the baby with no processing, chemical preservatives, packaging, or waste.
- Always fresh and exactly the right temperature; has the [perfect amount](#) of protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals; and is easy to digest.
- A [secure food source](#) in emergencies, such as during a pandemic.

### Encourage a discussion with prenatal families

The ideal time to begin a conversation about breastfeeding is during your first visit with prenatal families after they learn about their pregnancy. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has updated their popular pamphlets about breastfeeding. Consider using these resources to support discussions during the prenatal period:

- [10 great reasons to breastfeed your baby](#)
- [Ten valuable tips for successful breastfeeding](#)

Currently, these pamphlets are available online. Free print copies will soon be available to order directly from PHAC to give clients in your office.

### Supporting families to meet their infant feeding goals

The following phrases can be helpful leads when having discussions with families about how they plan to feed their baby, especially during the prenatal period.

- What have they heard or read about feeding babies?
- Do they have a support network of family and friends?
- If they have another child, how did they feed that child? What was that experience like?
- How would they prefer to get information: written or personal discussion?
- What is the family's means of access to information?
  - Do they have a cellphone? If yes, do they have data?
  - Do they have reliable internet at home?
  - If not, help them find hard copies, print for them, or direct them to their local health unit

For additional guidance, visit: [Prenatal Education - Key Messages for Ontario](#)



## Create a breastfeeding-friendly space in your office

Breastfeeding is a human right protected by the [Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms](#) (Section 15:1) and the [British Columbia Human Rights Code](#). It is discriminatory to ask a person who is breastfeeding to cover up or move elsewhere.

Learn more about Northern Health's commitment to supporting [breastfeeding-friendly spaces](#). Show a positive attitude for breastfeeding and welcome clients to breastfeed: any time, anywhere. Think about [requesting a decal](#) for your office.

## Client resources

- [Breastfeeding and breast milk](#) (Northern Health public webpage)
- [Baby's best chance: Parents' handbook of pregnancy and baby care](#) (BC Ministry of Health)
  - Print copies are available at health units and are prioritized for families experiencing vulnerabilities and/or those with access barriers to online resources

## Provider tools and online education opportunities

- [Breastfeeding professional resources](#) (Perinatal Services BC)
- [Breastfeeding protocols for health care providers](#) (Breastfeeding Resources Ontario)
- [Latching on: How family physicians can support breastfeeding patients](#) (1-hour module from UBC Faculty of Medicine)
- [But I don't do maternity care! Specialist physician management of the breastfeeding patient](#) (15-minute module from UBC Faculty of Medicine)
- [Physiology of lactation \(UBC\)](#)