

Challenges & Support Needed for Breastfeeding during LABOUR & DELIVERY/BIRTH



Medical interventions during labour & the birth process can interfere with both the initiation & the establishment of breastfeeding.

To successfully INITIATE breastfeeding, pregnant women need mother-friendly care during labour & delivery. All maternity units need a policy document providing evidence-based information covering appropriate management of labour & delivery care.

Mother-friendly care includes:



- Quiet & comfortable environment
- Freedom to move around
- Use of minimal medication & non-medicinal pain
- Availability of food & drink, delivery in a position of the woman's own choice
- Immediate skin-to-skin contact & early initiation of breastfeeding
- Companion of choice

Challenges during labour & delivery:

- Maternity services often lack a mother-friendly care policy or not fully implement existing policies
- Poorly implemented or no Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) policy & lack of support for timely initiation of breastfeeding
- Shortages of midwives and nurses & a lack of adequate training for them



How to improve support:

- Advocate for policy, investment & implementation of mother-friendly care and BFHI within maternity facilities
- Integrate mother-friendly policies & BFHI into Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (MNCH) quality of care standards, to ensure that labour & delivery services support breastfeeding
- Ensure that healthcare providers are competent to implement mother-friendly care & skin-to-skin contact immediately after delivery & early initiation of breastfeeding

