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## Midwifery

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# Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative practices and breast feeding duration in a cohort of first-time mothers in Adelaide, Australia

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### Abstract

#### Objective

to investigate the relationship between adherence to six of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) *Ten steps to successful breast feeding* and the duration of breast feeding in first-time mothers.

#### Design

a prospective study to assess the duration of breast feeding up to 6 months postpartum. Survival analysis techniques (Kaplan-Meier curves and Cox proportional hazard models) were used to interpret the data.

## Participants

317 women who had given birth to their first baby (at term) in a large teaching maternity hospital in Adelaide, South Australia, during the period March to November 2003.

## Findings

Ignoring all other factors, we found that women whose babies received a bottle feed, used a pacifier or dummy, or who used a nipple shield during their postnatal stay, were at significantly greater risk of weaning ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). After adjusting for socio-demographic variables, self-efficacy, intended duration of breast feeding, and method of delivery, the results unexpectedly showed that the only significant predictor of early weaning was breast feeding on demand. However, a composite variable indicating use of one or more of nipple shields, a dummy or bottle feeds while in hospital resulted in a significantly greater risk of weaning ( $p = 0.05$ ).

## Implications for practice

socio-demographic and cultural factors may be more important determinants of the duration of breast feeding than some of the very specific hospital practices targeted in the *Ten steps to successful breast feeding*. From a public health perspective, we may influence the duration of breast feeding through better post-discharge support services, or through interventions that improve attitudes to breast feeding in specific socio-cultural and economic groups.



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