

Alton Memorial Family Birth Center Seeks ‘Baby Friendly’ Designation

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The Family Birth Center at Alton Memorial Hospital is excited to announce that it is going “Baby Friendly.”

AMH was one of 14 Illinois hospitals to be awarded an \$11,000 “We Choose Health” grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control to pursue and complete Baby Friendly Hospital designation by 2016. The grant is distributed through the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Illinois Department of Public Health.

The goals of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) are to protect, promote and support optimal infant nutrition and mother/baby bonding experiences. This is accomplished by hospital-wide implementation of 10 specific evidence-based steps for successful breastfeeding. The focus is on more than breastfeeding, though. These steps also include measures that enhance mother/baby bonding, support mothers in the safe preparation of infant formula when necessary, and protect mothers against inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes.

“Breastfeeding is species-specific and has many important health benefits to both mothers and babies that breast-milk substitutes are not able to provide,” said Lori Fassler, OB nurse clinician at Alton Memorial. “A large part of the BFHI is that all breastfeeding mothers experience hospital practices that increase the likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year, and the World Health Organization endorses two or more years of breastfeeding for optimum health.

“However, there are instances where mothers cannot or choose not to breastfeed. In those cases, the Family Birth Center at AMH will provide formula for use during the hospital stay and will educate mothers in its safe home preparation. Our staff is already excellent at supporting mothers with their needs, but the educational opportunities afforded by this grant will help us to be even better.”

Currently, there are only four hospitals in Illinois that hold the BFHI designation. Grant funds will be used to provide 20 hours of breastfeeding, formula feeding and birth practices training (including hands-on skills) to each Family Birth Center employee and three hours of training to each physician to ensure all new mothers have access to staff members knowledgeable in all aspects of infant feeding and bonding.