

The Use of Human Milk and Breastfeeding in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Position Statement 3065

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In the third edition of *The Use of Human Milk and Breastfeeding in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit*, NANN recommends that all infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life with continued breastfeeding for 1 year or more. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2014 *Breastfeeding Report Card*¹ reveal that only 18.8% of infants are exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life, which is far below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 60.6%.¹

This revised position statement includes the following recommendations for increasing breastfeeding rates: (1) prenatal lactation intervention should focus on education so that families can make informed decisions,² (2) milk supply should be maintained through the use of a hospital-grade electric pump and daily ongoing assessment of maternal milk volume to ensure that mothers come to full milk volume and sustain milk production,³ (3) oral care with human milk should be used to promote immunological defense as well as positive oral experiences for the infant,² (4) human milk management, prioritization of fresh milk, and optimizing human milk feedings including the use of donor milk as a bridge to mother's own milk,⁴ and (5) vulnerable infants should be transitioned to at-breast feedings as soon as possible prior to discharge and an electronic scale should be used to measure pre- and post-weights to determine milk transfer.²

Recent research by Hallowell and colleagues⁵ demonstrated that only 49% of neonatal intensive care units had lactation consultants employed in the neonatal intensive care unit and nurses only reported providing breastfeeding support 13% (median) of the time during their prior shift. All neonatal nurses should possess evidence-based knowledge regarding the science of human milk, lactation, and breastfeeding. As the professional voice of neonatal nurses, NANN recommends that nurses integrate lactation support and care into their daily routines to ensure that vulnerable infants receive human milk through discharge and beyond.

The full NANN position statement can be accessed at http://www.nann.org/uploads/files/Use_of_Human_Milk_FINAL.pdf.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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