

# World Breastfeeding Week 2024 calls for community collaboration to support breastfeeding (with photos)

The Department of Health (DH), in collaboration with the Hospital Authority (HA), the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association and the Hong Kong Committee for United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), today (July 30) held a celebration event for World Breastfeeding Week 2024 to promote breastfeeding in the community, and called on all sectors of society to come together in supporting and valuing breastfeeding.

World Breastfeeding Week is observed annually between August 1 and 7. The theme of this year is "Closing the gap: Breastfeeding Support for All", which aims to encourage people from different sectors to enhance collaboration in eliminating factors that hinder breastfeeding and support mothers in sustaining breastfeeding.

Speaking at the event, the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, noted that the Government has been attaching importance to breastfeeding promotion and has been promoting breastfeeding through a multi-pronged strategy. Among these efforts, Baby-Friendly Health Facilities (including hospitals and Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs)) are important stakeholders, which provide professional support to breastfeeding mothers by offering appropriate information, knowledge and support from pregnancy to the post-partum period.

The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative is a worldwide programme launched by the World Health Organization and the UNICEF, aiming to bring every baby the best start in life by creating an environment that supports breastfeeding. The Baby-Friendly Health Facility accreditation includes a set of assessment and accreditation plan that recognises the achievement of healthcare facilities in promoting, supporting and protecting breastfeeding.

All eight public hospitals with obstetrics departments in Hong Kong have been accredited as Baby Friendly Hospitals (BFHs). Some private hospitals providing delivery services have also started the BFH accreditation process. Three MCHCs under the DH were accredited as Baby-Friendly MCHCs in 2019 and were revalidated in 2022. The DH has expedited the accreditation process for Baby-Friendly Health Facilities since last October. Five more MCHCs successfully obtained accreditation this year. Currently, there are eight Baby-Friendly MCHCs, while the remaining 20 MCHCs are undergoing the accreditation process. The eight Baby-Friendly MCHCs received accreditation certificates from the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association at the celebration event for World Breastfeeding Week 2024.

Dr Lee said that the Government will continue to strongly support the accreditation work of healthcare facilities and further enhance the

professional support offered by them. The DH will organise a large-scale symposium this November and invite overseas and local experts to share their experiences and latest research statistics and analysis on enhancing professional support for breastfeeding mothers. Overseas and local healthcare facilities can also exchange their experiences and views on working out infant feeding policies. Moreover, the Government will set up a working group under the Committee on Promotion of Breastfeeding to enhance and reinforce breastfeeding friendly measures of hospitals with obstetrics department.

In addition to the abovementioned measures, Dr Lee said that the HA will establish a breastmilk bank and formulate the related mechanism for breastmilk donation in 2025 to provide breastmilk for infants and young children who cannot be breastfed by their biological mothers, with a view to benefitting the premature and severely ill babies in need. Furthermore, aiming to provide a suitable and friendly environment for breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding in the community and workplace, the Government has been making publicity efforts to encourage the implementation of the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace policy and foster the establishment of Breastfeeding Friendly Premises in public places.

With the start of World Breastfeeding Week 2024, a series of promotional activities will be launched by the DH, including displaying publicity materials in various districts, advocating breastfeeding through radio and newspapers, and using social media to provide accurate information to breastfeeding families.

The Government will continue to encourage the community to further promote, protect and support breastfeeding with a view to creating a breastfeeding friendly environment and enhancing the sustainability of breastfeeding.

Members of the public can visit the [designated webpage](#) of the Family Health Service of the DH for more information on World Breastfeeding Week 2024.



