

Giving Babies Their Best Start

Touro earns The Gift designation for breastfeeding initiatives.



Shannon Grosch, RN, BSN, IBCLC

In October, the Family Birthing Center at Touro earned The Gift designation, awarded by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Bureau of Family Health. The Gift is only presented to hospitals that improve their practices under the World Health Organization's internationally recognized Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding Initiative.

Shannon Grosch, RN, BSN, IBCLC, is a lactation consultant at Touro Infirmary who recently spearheaded The Gift designation and is a leader on Touro's Baby-Friendly Team. The Ten Steps are a roadmap for success.

A Hospital's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding include policies that clearly communicate to staff; give staff the skills necessary to implement the policy, and inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding. Grosch has developed a unique way of educating patients who deliver at Touro, before the baby is born. With the support of Touro's Director of Women's Services, Kim Faught, RN, and Unit Director, Postpartum, Nursery and Lactation, Tanya Robinson, RN, she began visiting OBs clinics that deliver at Touro, educating staff and patients — often right in the waiting room — on different feeding options.

"This is about giving mothers education and support so they can make informed decisions," Grosch says. "I've had mothers who planned to exclusively formula feed who decided to breastfeed after learning about the benefits for her and her baby."

As part of the Ten Steps, the staff at Touro help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth. "It really is the best time — that

magical first hour," Grosch says. "We encourage the mother and the baby, and whoever her champion is, to be in the room by themselves for at least an hour after birth. As soon as the baby is born, if stable, he or she is placed skin to skin, regardless of the mothers' feeding preference for at least one hour or until completion of the first breastfeeding. We encourage mothers to recognize when their babies are ready to breastfeed, offering help if needed. Sometimes babies even self-latch! The patients love this bonding time and it has really helped with breastfeeding."

Studies show that early initiation of skin to skin contact stabilizes a baby's blood sugar, increases their body temperature and is more likely to lead to breastfeeding success.

Also as part of the Ten Steps, mothers are shown how to breastfeed and maintain lactation, even if separated from their infants. Sometimes, due to the health of the baby or mother, immediate breastfeeding isn't possible. Lactation consultants can be invaluable to jumpstart success.

Using a breast pump to stimulate milk supply within six hours of birth is ideal. "Early pumping produces a better milk supply," Grosch says. "Breastmilk is important for premature babies because it has extra nutrients, calories, fat, protein and vitamins. The breastmilk of a mother who delivers preterm is easier for a preemie to digest than formula, and it contains live cells and antibodies to protect the immature immune system from infection."

The Ten Steps also dictate that infants should be given no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless medically indicated. It is also important not to give pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.



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"When a mother is breastfeeding, we encourage her to exclusively nurse her baby," Grosch says. "Supplementing the baby often causes nipple and flow confusion, and decreases a mother's milk supply."

Additional steps include the practice of rooming in — allowing mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours per day — and encouraging breastfeeding on demand. Touro still offers the option of a nursery for those times when mom and baby can't stay together. Grosch says the staff at Touro encourages mothers to feed their babies eight or more times within 24 hours, or as often as baby wants. Patients are encouraged to feed their baby as soon as the baby shows early hunger cues such as: rooting; lip smacking; and putting their hand to their mouth. Crying is a late sign of hunger. "At Touro, we have a sign next to the clocks in the patients' rooms that read, 'Watch your baby not the clock.'"

The final step is to foster the formation of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers on discharge.

Moms are seen daily by the lactation consultants at Touro before leaving the hospital. The lactation consultants do follow-up calls and even outpatient consultation if needed. Patients are also informed of local groups and resources for support. It's all a part of the evidence-based,

internationally recognized steps to improve outcomes.

Babies who are breastfed have fewer ear infections, allergies, asthma and are less likely to die from SIDS. Moms enjoy multiple health benefits including decreased postpartum bleeding, and lower risks for developing breast and ovarian cancers.

"Promoting breastfeeding and giving patients the support and resources they need to be successful is what we're here for," Grosch says. "I work with the best group of lactation consultants, nurses, neonatal nurse practitioners, doctors, midwives, management and staff at Touro. We treat every patient like family."

The Family Birthing Center at Touro is the largest birthing facility in the greater New Orleans area, and the second largest in Louisiana. The Center offers a comprehensive, individualized and positive approach to birth preparation, labor and delivery, and postpartum care. Shortly after receiving The Gift designation, Touro was named hospital of the week by CHAMPS (Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices), a grant to improve maternal-child outcomes through breastfeeding.

Learn more at touro.com/fbc.

