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Colfax, WA – Whitman Hospital and Medical Center has been recognized for promoting breastfeeding to help get newborns off to a healthy start. Whitman Hospital recently received the **Breastfeeding Friendly Washington** Bronze recognition level from the Washington State Department of Health.

“Babies are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives if they breastfeed for at least six months,” said state Secretary of Health John Wiesman. “Hospitals that encourage and support breastfeeding are helping raise the healthiest next generation.”

In 2014, Governor Jay Inslee launched the **Healthiest Next Generation Initiative** to make the next generation of children the healthiest ever. The goal is to help children maintain a healthy weight, enjoy active lives, and eat well in places where they spend the most time — including early learning settings, schools, and their communities.

As part of the initiative, the Department of Health promotes and encourages breastfeeding through the new **Breastfeeding Friendly Washington** voluntary recognition program. Participating hospitals are recognized after completing **steps to support breastfeeding**. There are three different levels of recognition – Gold, Silver, and Bronze – depending on how many steps a facility completes.

Information on the recognition is posted at the facilities, on hospital webpages, and on the Department of Health’s webpage. Parents-to-be and other community members can learn what local hospitals and clinics are doing to support breastfeeding.

“Whitman Hospital is proud to join Governor Inslee and the Department of Health in promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding in Washington,” said Cristi Shindler, WHMC OB Nurse Manager.

In January 2011, US Surgeon General Regina Benjamin released *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*, which includes a call to “ensure that maternity care practices throughout the United States are fully supportive of breastfeeding.”

*Breastfeeding Friendly Washington’s Ten Steps for Birthing Hospitals* are:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all healthcare staff.
2. Train all healthcare staff in the skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.

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4. Place babies skin-to-skin with their mothers for 60 minutes immediately after birth and help mothers recognize and respond to feeding cues.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their infants.
6. Give infants no food or drink other than breastmilk unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming-in to allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand. Teach mothers cue-based feeding regardless of feeding method.
9. Give no artificial nipples or pacifiers to breastfeeding infants.
10. Establish a system for referring mothers to out-patient and community support.

To earn the Bronze recognition level, hospitals must implement steps 1, 4, 7 and 10.

The Department of Health's website has more information about Breastfeeding Friendly Washington ([www.doh.wa.gov/BFWA/hospitals](http://www.doh.wa.gov/BFWA/hospitals)) and the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative ([www.doh.wa.gov/healthiestnextgen](http://www.doh.wa.gov/healthiestnextgen)) or join us at #HealthiestNextGen.

The Department of Health website ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*.

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