

## **The Role of the Nurse in the Promotion of Breastfeeding**

AWHONN supports breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding. The nurse plays a key role in providing education aimed at successful initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding

AWHONN believes that nurses who care for women and infants in the prenatal and postpartum periods should foster an environment supportive of breastfeeding.

Responsibilities of the nurse include:

- ◆ Pursue professional basic and continuing education regarding the benefits of breastfeeding, the anatomy and physiology of lactation, initiation of lactation, and management of common concerns and problems.
- ◆ Promote non-separation of mother-baby in postpartum period.
- ◆ As part of preconception counseling, counsel on the benefits of breastfeeding.
- ◆ Provide breastfeeding education to all women during the prenatal period and explore concerns, fears, and myths that may inhibit successful breastfeeding.
- ◆ Work in collaboration with lactation specialists and /or other health care providers to optimize the breastfeeding experience for the mother and infant.
- ◆ Integrate culturally appropriate and sensitive information into all breastfeeding education.
- ◆ Assure breastfeeding initiation in the immediate postpartum period, barring maternal or neonatal complications.
- ◆ Provide information about breastfeeding resources in all discharge planning.
- ◆ Utilize and conduct research related to breastfeeding.

**Background:** Nurses are frequently the sole providers available to assist and support with the initiation of breastfeeding. It is, therefore, critical that nurses are well-prepared to support a woman in her decision to breastfeed as well as to assist women in overcoming assumptions that breastfeeding is not an option.

*Approved by the AWHONN Board of Directors, June 1999*