

STEP 4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within a half-hour of birth.

This Step is now interpreted as:

Place babies in skin-to-skin contact with their mothers immediately following birth for at least an hour. Encourage mothers to recognize when their babies are ready to breastfeed and offer help if needed.

Global Criteria - Step Four

Out of the randomly selected mothers with vaginal births or caesarean sections without general anaesthesia in the maternity wards:

- At least 80% confirm that their babies were placed in skin-to-skin contact with them immediately or within five minutes after birth and that this contact continued without separation for an hour or more, unless there were medically justifiable reasons.

(Note: It is preferable that babies be left even longer than an hour, if feasible, as they may take longer than 60 minutes to breastfeed).

- At least 80% also confirm that they were encouraged to look for signs for when their babies were ready to breastfeed during this first period of contact and offered help, if needed.

(Note: The baby should not be forced to breastfeed but, rather, supported to do so when ready. If desired, the staff can assist the mother with placing her baby so it can move to her breast and latch when ready).

If any of the randomly selected mothers have had caesarean deliveries with general anaesthesia, at least 50% should report that their babies were placed in skin-to-skin contact with them as soon as the mothers were responsive and alert, with the same procedures followed.

At least 80% of the randomly selected mothers with babies in special care report that they have had a chance to hold their babies skin-to-skin or, if not, the staff could provide justifiable reasons why they could not.

Observations of vaginal deliveries, if necessary to confirm adherence to Step 4, show that in at least 75% of the cases babies are placed with their mothers and held skin-to-skin within five minutes after birth for at least 60 minutes without separation, and that the mothers are shown how to recognize the signs that their babies are ready to breastfeed and offered help, or there are justified reasons for not following these procedures.