

Latch on NYC Initiative – Myths & Facts

Myth: The city is requiring hospitals to put formula under lock and key.

Fact: Hospitals are not being required to keep formula under lock and key under the City's voluntary initiative. Formula will be fully available to any mother who chooses to feed her baby with formula. What the program does is encourage hospitals to end what had long been common practice: putting promotional formula in a mother's room, or in a baby's bassinet or in a go-bag – even for breastfeeding mothers who had not requested it.

Myth: Mothers who want formula will have to convince a nurse to sign it out by giving a medical reason.

Fact: Mothers can and always will be able to simply ask for formula and receive it free of charge in the hospital – no medical necessity required, no written consent required.

Myth: Mothers requesting formula will be subject to a lecture from the nurse.

Fact: The City's new initiative does not set a requirement that mothers asking for formula receive a lecture or mandated talk. For the last three years, New York State Law under the Breastfeeding Bill of Rights, has required that mothers simply be provided accurate information on the benefits of breastfeeding. This requirement has not changed under the City's new initiative.

Myth: Latch on NYC is taking away and/or jeopardizing a woman's right to choose how to feed her baby.

Fact: The initiative is designed to support mothers who decide to breastfeed. For those women, the program asks hospital staff to respect the mother's wishes and refrain from supplementing her baby with formula (unless it becomes medically necessary or the mother changes her mind). It does not restrict the mother's nursing options in any way – nor does it restrict access to formula for those who want it.

Myth: Formula will be forbidden in some fashion.

Fact: If a mother decides she wants to use formula (or a combination of formula and breastmilk), she will be supported in her decision and her baby will be given formula during the hospital stay. If a breastfeeding mother changes her mind or requests formula at any time, her baby will be given formula.

Myth: Positive benefits from breastfeeding are being overblown or aren't true.

Fact: There is overwhelming evidence, supported by national and international health organizations, showing that breastfeeding produces better health outcomes for babies and mothers than formula. For mothers, breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancers. Babies that are breastfed have a lower risk of ear, respiratory and gastrointestinal infections, as well as childhood asthma, than babies who are formula fed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics just published new guidance to pediatricians in February 2012, reaffirming the evidence that the health benefits of breastfeeding over formula are clear: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827.full.pdf+html>