

# The Importance of Exclusive Breastfeeding in Preventing Waste in Maternity Hospitals

Dr Yvonne Ryan-Fogarty, University of Limerick  
Dr Genevieve Becker, BEST Services, Galway

Waste generation in hospitals is of major concern. Healthcare needs to move toward preventative and demand-led models for sustainability.

This poster presents the findings of two research methods: problem orientation, and the Infant Feeding Environmental Review Tool, a novel assessment tool, piloted in two Irish maternity hospitals.

Ultimately demand reduction at source requires prioritisation; this strategy is complimentary to health policy on infant feeding. Therefore, exclusive breastfeeding is not only a public health priority; it is crucial to environmental sustainability.



>790,000 bottles were required in 2013



12 tonnes of plastic teats & bottles  
27 tonnes of glass



63 tonnes artificial milk bought  
38 tonnes wasted



6 tonnes cardboard, foil and other packaging

## Contributing Factors



53% of infants received artificial milk in maternity hospitals



An infant's stomach capacity is 5-7 ml on day 1 of life. Bottles are 70 ml



The average infant stay is 3.2 days  
At least 18 bottles and teats are used in this time

## Importance of Breastfeeding



Breastfeeding is ecological: no manufacturing, packaging or transport



Breastfeeding reduces food demand and is essential for food security



Exclusive breastfeeding is essential to health protection  
Prevents waste and saves money