

# **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Slovakia**

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Breastfeeding was for centuries an integral part of the reproductive process and in our country had strong tradition.

At that time most of the women were giving birth at home and they continued to breastfeed with the support of friends and relatives. The subject of breastfeeding was very frequent artistic motif of pictures, sculptures.



This tradition changed in the twentieth century - decrease in breastfeeding globally, as well as in our country.

In the beginning of the century infant mortality rate in Slovakia was very high. Some doctors were pro-breastfeeding and called for attention to the high risk of infant mortality of bottle-fed babies:

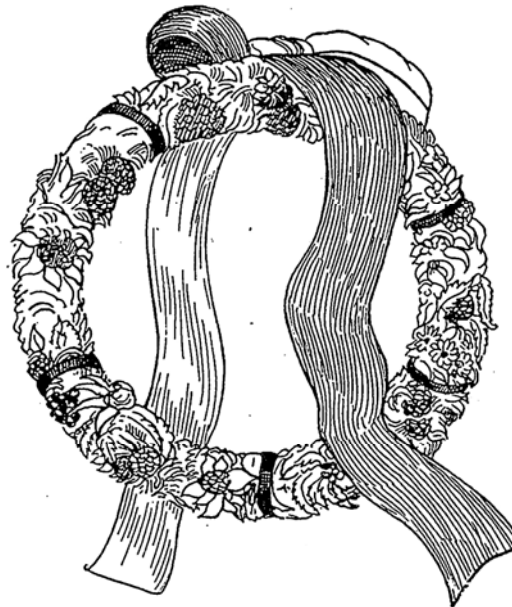
It was 7 –times higher than of breast-fed babies at that time.

## Poměr úmrtnosti dětí kojených a uměle živěných.



děti kojené.

Za stejnou dobu umírá  
dětí uměle živěných  
7 krát více  
než dětí kojených.



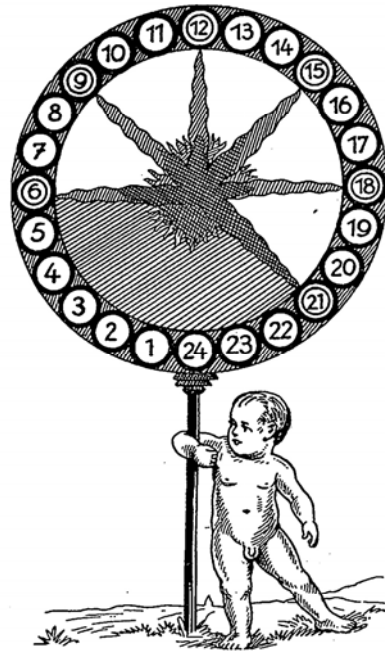
děti uměle živěné.



However, the advices for successful breastfeeding were incorrect:

A strict schedule of the frequency and duration of breastfeeds, separation of mother and baby in hospital, washing of nipples and giving of prelacteal and supplementary bottle feeds had harmful influence.

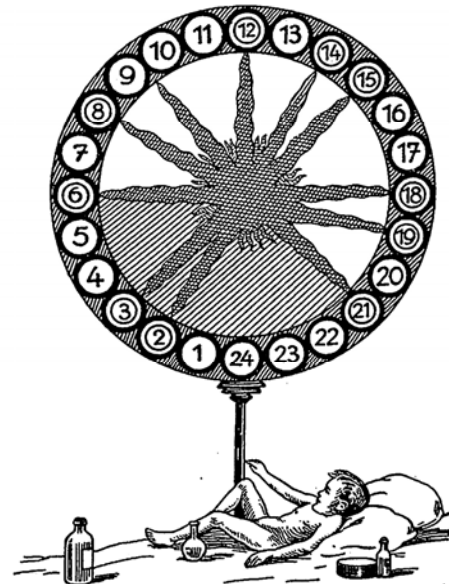
Matky, kojte své děti dle hodin -- ne dřív než za 3 hodiny.



Toho se držím a prospívá mi to!

Budete-li je kojiti nepravidelně — jistě onemocní.

To je příčinou mé choroby!



The rigid rules became firmly established  
in all hospitals.

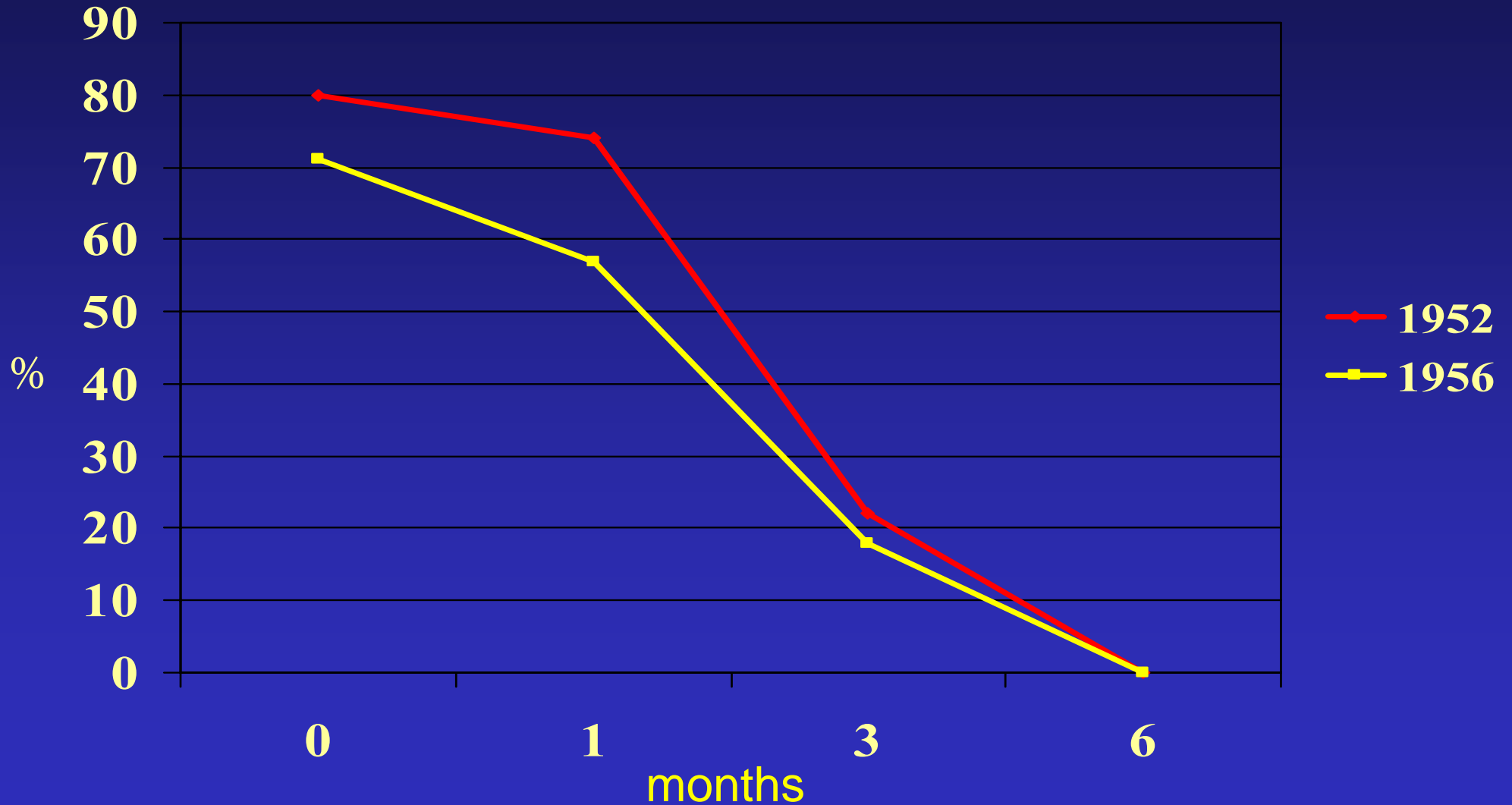
By the 1950-s, almost all women in  
Slovakia were giving birth in hospital.





Breastfeeding rate has decreased since then  
(*Getlík A.: Výživa dojčiat v okrese Trenčín*)

# Breastfeeding Rate in Slovakia Years 1952 and 1956



## **Breastfeeding Promotion after the WHO/UNICEF Meeting on Infant and Young Child Feeding, (Geneva 1979).**

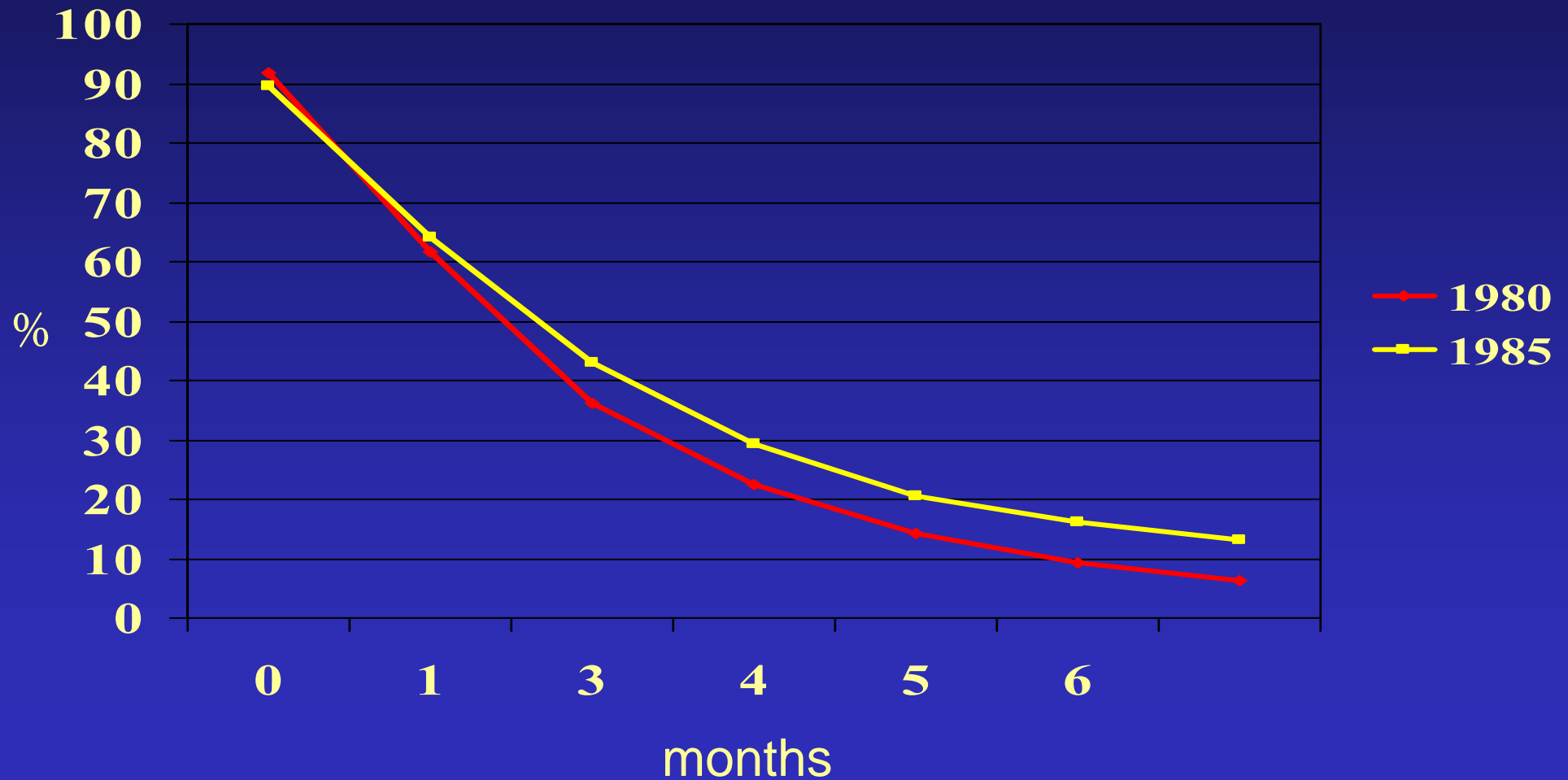
Its “Recommendations” were accepted only by pediatricians.

Breastfeeding promotion campaign has helped to stop the negative trend and achieve good results in the first weeks, but at the end of the 4-th month 80% infants were bottle-fed.

*(Haľamová V., Kops J.: Breastfeeding Rate in significant set mother- infants couples from all regions of Slovakia)*

# Breastfeeding Rate in Slovakia

## Years 1980 and 1985



**Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI)**  
**the most convenient program for further**  
**breastfeeding promotion**  
**1991**

*The Scientific basis of the best mother / child care,  
breastfeeding have been synthetized into  
,,Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding ,,*



**These „Ten Steps „ are minimum requirements  
for health facilities to recognize as baby – friendly.**

***The Slovak Committee for UNICEF is the leading  
force in transforming of the maternity care practices  
in Baby Friendly Hospitals and promoting breastfeeding  
in Slovakia.***

## *Activities highlights:*

### *Training activities:*

- *WHO/UNICEF Breastfeeding counseling - A training course for health workers (1000 participants from all regions)*
- *Establishment of breast feeding support groups, seminars, workshops for mothers (300 participants attended) for continuous support after discharge from hospital.*
- *In – service training on the BFHI ,the support of hospitals to fulfill 10 Steps*

## ***Public Awareness campaign***

- *Articles on the benefit of breast feeding regularly in the magazine “Diet’a” (“Child”). In each issue- from the 1995 till today - „Breastfeeding counseling“ column answered questions of readers about breastfeeding problems.  
810 questions on breastfeeding were answered. The topic of promotion breastfeeding later appeared also in all magazines for women, radio and TV.*
- *The „Bottle – feeding Culture“ changed to  
„Breast – feeding Culture“*

**Results:**

**23 Baby Friendly Hospitals**

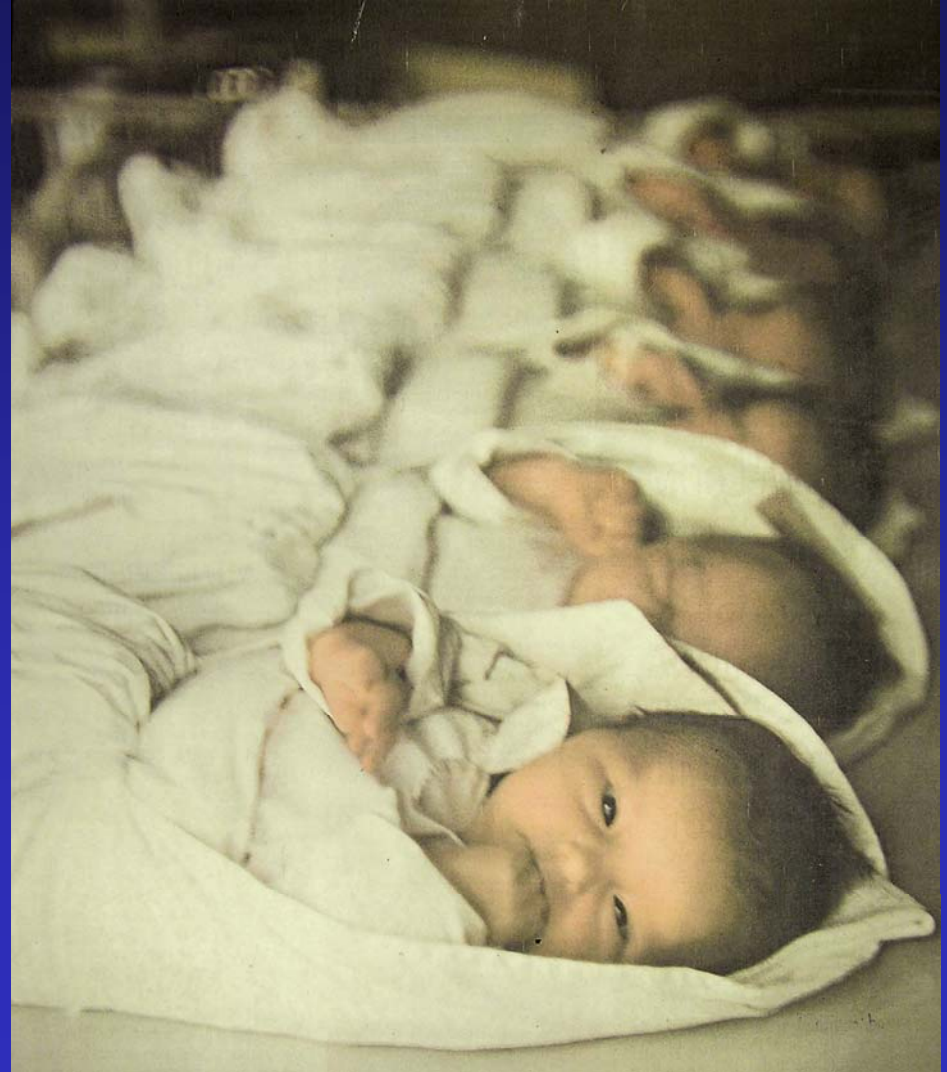
**Up to now 23 hospitals (from 70) in  
Slovakia fulfill the criteria for BFH  
certificate.**

**There were problems with the following steps of BFHI:**  
**Step 4: Help mother initiate breastfeeding within half an hour after birth**



**Step 6: Give newborn infants no food or drink other than Breastmilk, unless medically indicated.**

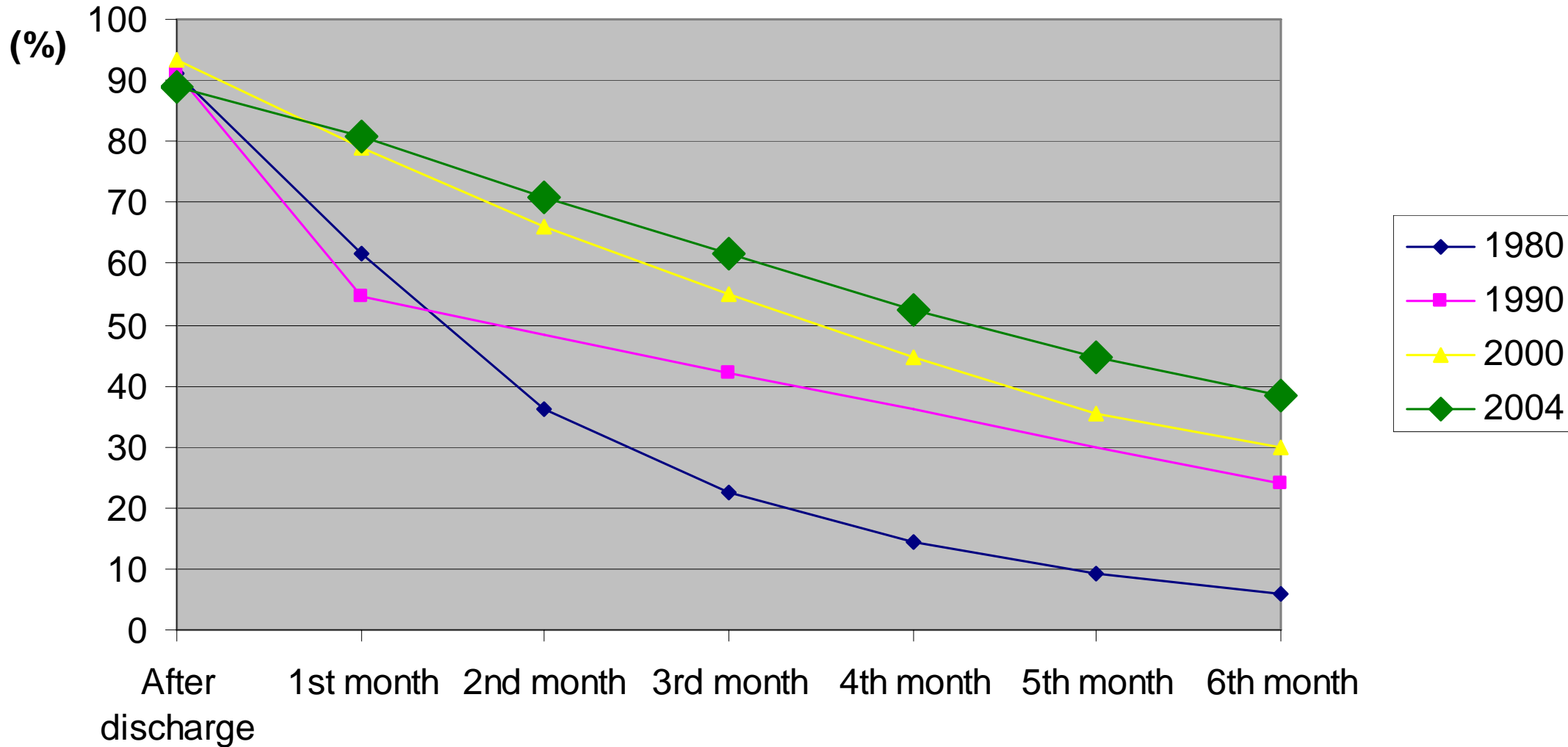
**Step 7: Practice rooming-in - allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hour a day.**





# Breastfeeding Rate in Slovakia

## Years 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2004



**Average values of full BF - all infants in Slovakia.**



**The percentage of infants who were fully breastfed increased at the end 4 – 6 months, but there is still space for improvement.**

**What can we do to support and enable women to breastfeed better and more successfully?**

- It is necessary to continue in breastfeeding protection and promotion activities in Slovakia.
- Scientific knowledge in last decades allowed great progress in understanding of previously unknown physiologic processes linked with breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding provides not only optimal nutrition for a newborn baby but it also provides the whole complex of factors, which allow the best after delivery adaptation and contributes to better health in childhood and later life.