



For Immediate Release:

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Breastfeeding-Makes for a Healthier Los Angeles Tips and facts for LA County residents

LOS ANGELES – In Los Angeles County, 90% of new moms begin breastfeeding in the hospital, but only 15% continue exclusively breastfeeding for the recommended 6 months. August marks the start of World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This year’s World Breastfeeding Week theme is “Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mothers,” which recognizes that new moms need ongoing encouragement and assistance once they leave the hospital.

“Breastfeeding is low-cost and prevents acute and chronic diseases in moms and babies, promotes bonding, supports socio-cognitive development, and helps get every baby off to a good start,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Family members, communities, employers, peer counselors and health care providers must all be a part of a mother’s support system as she provides her infant with the optimal first food.”

Many hospitals in Los Angeles County have already shown their commitment to making breastfeeding the norm. Of the 58 maternity hospitals in LA County, 13 have achieved the prestigious “Baby-Friendly Hospital” designation by implementing the *10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, practices shown to improve breastfeeding initiation and exclusive breastfeeding rates after delivery. Between 2010 and 2012, three county-run hospitals (LAC+USC, Harbor-UCLA, and Olive View-UCLA medical centers) achieved the Baby-Friendly designation, resulting in exclusive breastfeeding rates increasing from 37% to 59%. An additional 16 hospitals are working toward achieving the designation with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and BreastfeedLA.

On July 30, the LA County Board of Supervisors supported a proclamation encouraging all employers in LA County to implement lactation accommodation policies in accordance with existing state and federal law. Employers who support breastfeeding employees note improved morale and productivity among their staff as moms are able to return to work sooner and use less time off to care for sick children; while also promoting and facilitating longer duration of breastfeeding and the numerous health benefits that accrue for mothers and children.

Studies have shown breastfeeding is good for the health of both mother and baby. Infants are recommended to be breastfed exclusively for the first 6 months of life. Exclusive means that babies do not receive any food or drink other than breast milk, including water, formula, or cereal. Infants should continue to breastfeed until 1 year of life and beyond, but the first solid foods should be introduced at 6 months. Breast milk can help prevent illnesses in infants such as ear infections, diarrhea, asthma, type 2 diabetes, SIDS, and obesity. Health benefits for mom include: lower risk of breast and ovarian cancers and diabetes, and more rapid postpartum weight loss.



Tips for mom's on breastfeeding:

- Start breastfeeding as soon as you can after your baby is born.
- Encourage partners to attend prenatal classes to learn about breastfeeding.
- Let your doctor, family, friends, and employers know that you are planning to feed your baby only breast milk, and need their full support.
- Find a Baby-Friendly designated hospital near you: <http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/find-facilities/list-of-designated-facilities--by-state>.
- Hold your newborn skin-to-skin right after birth. Your baby will be alert and interested in breastfeeding. Tell your doctor and nurse that you want this, and continue the practice once you're home.
- Take advantage of programs that provide mother-to-mother support and peer counseling, like WIC and La Leche League.
- Ask for help if you need it. Ask your nurse if the hospital has a lactation specialist or breastfeeding support groups available. Call upon friends and family with breastfeeding experience.
- Talk with your employer about workplace accommodations that help ensure successful breastfeeding after you return to work.

For more information on the importance of breastfeeding and breastfeeding resources, visit:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/>
- LA County Department of Public Health, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health program: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/CAH/BreastfeedingPromotion.htm>
- Breastfeed LA: <http://breastfeedla.org/>

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