

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN PALM BEACH COUNTY CELEBRATES NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH

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Palm Beach County, FL--The Florida Department of Health in Palm Beach County is celebrating National Breastfeeding Month in August. This year's theme—Breastfeeding: Foundation of Life—focuses on promoting breastfeeding as a vital, lifelong source of health for babies and mothers.

“Breastfeeding is very beneficial to a newborn. It supplies good nutrition, helps create a mother and child bond and leads to a healthier child, said Dr. Alina Alonso, Director, DOH-Palm Beach.

The department is working to promote breastfeeding as a vital health activity, and encourages breastfeeding-friendly hospitals, child care facilities, work places and communities to do the same.

How to feed a new baby is one of the first important decisions a family has to make, and most women who choose to breastfeed have a specific goal in mind.

Research shows:

- Breastfed infants have a reduced risk of infections, asthma, obesity and SIDS compared with formula-fed infants;
- Mothers who breastfeed have a reduced risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and postpartum depression compared to mothers who don't breastfeed;
- It's estimated that \$13 billion would be saved per year if 90 percent of U.S. infants were breastfed exclusively for six months.

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months mothers need supportive work policies, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply.

Healthiest Weight Florida within the Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention, in partnership with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Healthy Start, and the Florida Child Care Food Program, has a variety of tools available for mothers and families, as well as employers, childcare facilities, and hospitals and health care professionals. Visit <http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com/activities/breastfeeding.html> for more information.

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As part of the department's Healthiest Weight Florida initiative, the Baby Steps to Baby Friendly project focuses on increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration among Florida women. Baby Steps to Baby Friendly supports hospitals wishing to improve and enhance maternity care practices related to breastfeeding, including achieving the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, developed by the World Health Organization.

Locally, WIC offers resources and staff to help breastfeeding mothers. WIC offers breast pumps for exclusively breastfeeding clients who are going back to work or school, and loaner breast pumps for babies in the NICU and other high risk conditions. The Greenacres and West Palm Beach 45th Street WIC sites have International Board Certified Lactation Consultants who have a high level of specialized knowledge in breastfeeding to assist clients. WIC also has trained breastfeeding peer counselors in Lantana, Delray, Belle Glade, Jupiter and Greenacres health centers. The trained peer counselors are chosen from the same socioeconomic/ethnic groups as WIC clients and have successfully breastfed their own babies. Breastfeeding peer counselors provide mother- to-mother basic breastfeeding education and support to pregnant and breastfeeding moms.

Breastfeeding mothers may also receive afterhours support through a warm-line ran by the peer counselors.

The local agency has the following activities occurring during the month of August 2018:

- Starting August 1st, WIC clients will display their goals for breastfeeding on a breastfeeding "tree" at each site. This is also a site contest tailored to the theme
- The Palm Beach County Breastfeeding Coalition will honor and celebrate WIC staff for their contributions to breastfeeding in Palm Beach County on August 7th
- WIC clients will receive various giveaways and participate in educational puzzles during their wait times all month long
- Fun facts about breastfeeding will be announced daily August 6-10;
- The culminating event will take place, August 30, with an all staff meeting. The meeting will feature Florida Breastfeeding Coalition's President, Dr. Jessica Gordon as guest speaker. There will be a men's panel discussion and video discussion from "Chocolate Milk" mini documentary which addresses breastfeeding disparities in black women. The winner for the site contest will also be announced.

For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556, In Palm Beach County 561-877-693-6703 or visit www.FloridaWIC.org. To learn more about National Breastfeeding Month and the benefits of breastfeeding visit www.usbreastfeeding.org, www.Illi.org or www.flbreastfeeding.org.

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