

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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## **THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROMOTES AWARENESS DURING NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH**

**TALLAHASSEE**—August is National Breastfeeding Awareness Month and Healthiest Weight Florida, in collaboration with WIC, Healthy Start, the Florida Child Care Food Program and the Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention, is announcing its own August Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign.

The purpose of the campaign is to promote breastfeeding as a vital health activity as well as encourage breastfeeding friendly communities throughout the state of Florida. Each week a new component will be announced which will introduce new and exciting resources for women and families, employers, child care facilities, hospitals and healthcare professionals.

“Breastfeeding plays a critical role in the health of both mother and child,” said Dr. Celeste Philip, Deputy Secretary for Health and Deputy State Health Officer for Children’s Medical Services. “Educating and supporting new and expecting parents helps create healthy and sustainable practices that benefit Florida’s infants and families.”

Infant feeding is one of the most important decisions a family can make. Research shows that babies that receive only breast milk for the first six months of life are less likely to develop a wide range of chronic and acute diseases including ear infections, diarrheal diseases, asthma, obesity and respiratory illnesses. They are also less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In addition, breastfeeding for nine months reduces a baby’s odds of being overweight by 30 percent.

Mothers benefit from breastfeeding with a decreased risk for breast and ovarian cancers. The Florida Department of Health, as well as medical organizations such as the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics, strongly recommends that babies exclusively breastfeed for about the first six months of life and continue to breastfeed for at least one to two years to achieve optimal health.

Based on 2013 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only 71.8 percent of women in Florida have ever tried breastfeeding compared to the national average of 76.5 percent. The Department of Health offers a variety of programs, materials and resources to encourage breastfeeding friendly environments throughout the sunshine state.

- The **Florida WIC Program** offers counseling and breastfeeding materials to pregnant and breastfeeding clients. WIC also participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) breastfeeding peer counseling program.
- **Florida’s Healthy Start** promotes healthy behaviors and provides services to pregnant women, women in between pregnancies, infants and children to obtain the support needed to reduce the risks for poor health outcomes.

- The **Florida Child Care Food Program** (CCFP) awards recognitions to breastfeeding friendly facilities and provides education to child care providers through workshops, online modules, and educational materials.
- The **Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention** supports the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a recognition established by Baby-Friendly USA promoting human milk as the best source of nourishment for new babies. Evidence shows several specific practices in birth facilities can significantly affect breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity.

For more information, visit [www.HealthiestWeightFL.com/bf](http://www.HealthiestWeightFL.com/bf).

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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