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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CELEBRATES NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH



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Tallahassee, Fla.— This August, the Florida Department of Health is celebrating National Breastfeeding Month. This year's theme—Charting the Course Together—focuses on using data and measurement to build and reinforce the connections between breastfeeding and a broad spectrum of other health topics and initiatives.

“A significant body of evidence supports breastfeeding as critical to improve health outcomes of mothers and babies,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip. “Supporting mom and baby during the first few days of life are critical for successful breastfeeding.”

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; and
- It's estimated that \$13 billion in healthcare costs would be saved per year if 90 percent of U.S. infants were breastfed exclusively for six months.

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

As a part of the department's Healthiest Weight Florida and Florida's Healthy Babies initiatives, the Baby Steps to Baby Friendly project focuses on increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration among Florida women. Thirteen Florida hospitals have been designated as Baby Friendly and the department is currently partnered with 57 hospitals in 31 counties across the state. To learn more about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly, visit <http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com/activities/baby-steps.html>

Local WIC agencies also offer resources and staff to help breastfeeding mothers. WIC agencies may have International Board Certified Lactation Consultants who have a high level of specialized knowledge in breastfeeding to assist clients. WIC agencies also have Breastfeeding

Peer Counseling Programs. The trained peer counselors are chosen from the same socio/economic/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. WIC also supports breastfeeding through the breast pump loan program.

For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556 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.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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