

Supporting What's Best for Babies, Moms, and Communities

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Breastfeeding is best for babies, moms and for communities, so how can we offer support? First, let's learn why breastfeeding is so important. Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed an infant during the first year of life according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Association of Family Physicians. Professional medical associations recommend babies be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months, and that moms continue supplemental breastfeeding to at least 1 year.

BENEFITS FOR BABY				
↓ ear infections	↓ respiratory & digestive illnesses	↓ diabetes	↓ dermatitis	↓ allergies & asthma
improves infant & mom bonding	↓ Obesity rates for children and adults	infant brain development	increased IQ points	↓ auto-immune diseases

Breastfeeding helps mom attain normal weight and reduces risk of some cancers. As an essential part of the reproductive cycle for moms, the practice results in faster recovery from pregnancy. It also reduces her breast cancer risk.

Communities are focused on healthcare today and reform begins by cutting healthcare costs. A proven way is through promotion of healthy behaviors, like breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding offers significant savings to families, since infant formula costs about \$7 per day while breastfeeding is less than \$1 per day. And considering the cans, bottles, shipping, processing, and advertising that goes into promoting artificial baby milk "a.k.a infant formula," the reduction in environmental waste as huge. Breast-milk may seem to be white, but it is also green!



Even though we know that exclusive breastfeeding reduces disease for babies and mothers, many moms stop breastfeeding early because of concerns about maintaining lactation once returning to work or school. Some fear criticism if they breastfeed in public or at their work-sites. Others delay returning to work, or don't return at all, because they feel employment prevents them from successfully breastfeeding. The greatest gift we can give these babies, mothers, and families is to support the "social norming" of breastfeeding. Reminding mothers that it's *normal* and *acceptable* to breastfeed *anytime* and *anyplace* her baby needs feeding will give mothers the confidence they need to breastfeed. A smile and friendly words of encouragement cost little but mean so much to these moms!



Mothers need not choose between breastfeeding and returning to work if simple accommodations are made in the workplace. Employers can retain valuable employees with a supportive work environment. A healthy mother is an employee who contributes productively in the workplace. Employers see reduced sick-leave for parents of breast-fed children. Feeling accepted in extended families, businesses, churches, worksites, and at community functions will promote breastfeeding as the norm. The popular WIC program offers extensive breastfeeding support.

Community minded businesses and worksites can learn how easy and beneficial it is to offer breastfeeding support. Contact your public health department this week and find out how you can support breastfeeding and lower healthcare costs.

