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Updated Breastfeeding Recommendations from the AAP

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently updated its breastfeeding policy based on the most current research documenting and reinforcing the short- and long-term advantages for breastfeeding. The group strongly reaffirms its recommendation that babies be fed only breastmilk until they are about 6 months old, followed by continued breastfeeding with the introduction of solids. Continuation of breastfeeding is recommended for one year or longer, as mutually desired by mother and child.

Not only is the AAP recognizing that breastfeeding is best for moms and babies, but also for the nation's well being. Breastfeeding and the use of human milk provide unique nutritional and non-nutritional benefits to the infant and the mother and, in turn, optimize infant, child and adult health as well as child growth and development. Because recently published studies have confirmed the risks of not breastfeeding, the AAP finds that "infant feeding should not be considered as a lifestyle choice but rather as a basic health issue."

They highlight the effects of breastfeeding in the prevention of allergies, eczema, respiratory illnesses, ear infections, gastrointestinal diseases, obesity, SIDS, celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, and child abuse/neglect. Also, breastfeeding has a positive effect on cognitive development. Maternal benefits, such as the prevention of heart disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, breast and ovarian cancer are included as well.

Also notable in this updated policy is the recommendation for hospital practices that support breastfeeding such as direct skin to skin contact and delaying routine procedures until after the first breastfeeding--- including bathing, weighing, measuring, and administering vitamin K. Pacifiers should be offered no earlier than 3-4 weeks of age so that breastfeeding can be established.

In Washington County a breastfeeding coalition has been established to promote and support breastfeeding. The coalition is working to promote the awareness of current breastfeeding recommendations. For more information about the coalition contact Jennifer at 262-335-4464.

Breastfeeding is a health investment for mother and her infant. For more information on breastfeeding and other recommendations from the AAP go to www.healthychildren.org