



Washington County Breastfeeding Coalition

“Working together to make breastfeeding the norm”

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Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mothers

World Breastfeeding Week will be celebrated worldwide August 1-7, 2013. The 2013 World Breastfeeding Week theme, ***Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mothers***, highlights the importance of providing support to breastfeeding families.

Infant feeding is one of the most important decisions that new families make. Evidence is clear that breastfeeding is the ideal way to feed an infant. Research shows that infants who are not exclusively breastfed for their first six months of life are more likely to develop a wide range of chronic and acute diseases, including ear infections, diarrheal diseases, asthma, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, obesity and respiratory illnesses. Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding with a decreased risk for breast and ovarian cancers.

Despite most mothers wanting to breastfeed, many are met with multiple and complex barriers that keep them from achieving their personal breastfeeding goals. Support and encouragement from all angles can make success possible for mothers who wish to breastfeed. Negative attitudes and practices of the mother's closest support network can pose a sizeable barrier, making it difficult for mothers and babies to successfully breastfeed. “Learning how to breastfeed takes time and patience for new mothers and infants. It is important to remember that families, friends, healthcare providers, employers, childcare providers, communities, and even the media play a crucial role in mother's overall success with breastfeeding,” said Elizabeth Brooks, President of the International Lactation Consultant Association® (ILCA®).

Appropriate breastfeeding support can build a mother's confidence with breastfeeding. “It is critical that breastfeeding families be supported by their community. This support can be expressed by healthcare providers adopting policies and practices that assume breastfeeding as the normal feeding method for infants, by employers providing a private place and flexible work options to express breastmilk during the work day, or by childcare providers talking to new families about how they support breastfeeding,” said Brooks. Breastfeeding peer counselors, mother-to-mother support groups, and International Board Certified Lactation Consultants work in communities and can provide a wealth of knowledge to breastfeeding families.

In Washington County, we are promoting breastfeeding and supporting through the work of the Washington County Breastfeeding Coalition. Since 2009 the coalition has been working toward empowering and educating families, childcare centers, and worksites. The coalition has taken an active role in Washington County's Celebrate Families and the Washington County Fair. In fact you may have seen our Rock and Relax area at the recent Washington County Fair. In 2012 the Breastfeeding Coalition became a member of the Washington County Healthy People Project (www.getmovingwashingtoncounty.com). Together we are working to make sure that breastfeeding is the norm in Washington County. For more information on the coalition, visit our website: www.co.washington.wi.us/685 or call Jennifer at 262-335-4464.

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