

Public Health Professionals Talking Points



- According to the U.S. Surgeon General, breastfeeding is vitally important to the health of mothers and their infants. The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes breastfeeding as the standard model for measurement of infant growth, development, and health, and recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about six months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced through the first year of life or longer, as mutually desired by mother and infant.
- Breast milk not only provides infants with all the nutrients they need for growth and development, it also contains immune protection against both common and severe childhood illnesses. Children who were not breastfed, or who were not breastfed exclusively, are at increased risk for diabetes, obesity, allergies, asthma, childhood leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome, and other conditions.
- For mothers, breastfeeding reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, breast and ovarian cancer, and other poor health outcomes. Breastfeeding also releases hormones that relax the mother and provide a special bond between her and her child.
- The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to provide breastfeeding employees with reasonable break time and a place, other than a bathroom, to express breast milk during the workday—up until the child’s first birthday. However, many parents and employers are not aware of this requirement.
- Today, women with children are the fastest growing segment of the workforce, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More than 58 percent of new mothers return to work by the time their baby is only 3 months old.
- In Colorado, more than 89 percent of all new mothers choose to breastfeed, according to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Report Card on Breastfeeding. Yet many of these women stop exclusively breastfeeding when they return to work. Only 24 percent of women in Colorado exclusively breastfeed for the recommended six months.
- In January 2011, U.S. Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin called on public health workers, families, and employers to remove some of the obstacles women who want to breastfeed their babies face. By providing accommodations for nursing mothers, employers can lower their company’s absenteeism and turnover rates, reduce health-care costs, and improve employee loyalty, morale, and productivity.
- The Northern Colorado Breastfeeding-Friendly Worksite designation, offered by the Northern Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition (NCBC), is a benefit available to employers who implement worksite lactation support initiatives. Worksite lactation programs cost little and have flexible options to meet the specific needs of any business. Lactation support programs can make a significant impact for employees and can result in a \$3 return for every \$1 invested. Information and toolkits to support program implementation are available from the NCBC.
- Businesses interested in becoming a designated Breastfeeding-Friendly Worksite can visit www.nocobreastfeeding.org for more information.