

Press Release

Contact: Melonie Williams
Lake Cumberland District Health Department
606-678-4761 ext 1127

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOPIC: Breastfeeding

THE BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding, also known as **nursing**, is the feeding of babies and young children with milk from a woman's breast. Health professionals recommend that breastfeeding begin within the first hour of a baby's life and continue as often and as much as the baby wants. During the first few weeks of life babies may nurse roughly every two to three hours. The duration of a feeding is usually ten to fifteen minutes on each breast. Older children feed less often. Mothers may pump milk so that it can be used later when breastfeeding is not possible. Breastfeeding has a number of benefits to both mother and baby, which infant formula lacks.

Deaths of an estimated 820,000 children under the age of five could be prevented globally every year with increased breastfeeding. Breastfeeding decreases the risk of respiratory tract infections and diarrhea, both in developing and developed countries. Other benefits include lower risks of asthma, food allergies, celiac disease, type 1 diabetes, and leukemia. Breastfeeding may also improve cognitive development and decrease the risk of obesity in adulthood. Mothers may feel pressure to breastfeed; however in the developed world children generally grow up normally when bottle fed.

Benefits for the mother include less blood loss following delivery, better uterus shrinkage, weight loss, and less postpartum depression. Breastfeeding delays the return of menstruation and fertility, a phenomenon known as lactational amenorrhea. Long term benefits for the mother include decreased risk of breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, and rheumatoid arthritis. Breastfeeding is often less expensive than infant formula.

Health organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), recommend breastfeeding exclusively for six months. This means that no other foods or drinks other than possibly vitamin D are typically given. After the introduction of foods at six months of age, recommendations include continued breastfeeding until at least one to two years of age. Globally about 38% of infants are only breastfed during their first six months of life. In the United States, about 75% of women begin breastfeeding and about 13% only breastfeed until the age of six months. Medical conditions that do not allow breastfeeding are rare. Mothers who take certain recreational drugs and medications should not breastfeed. Smoking, limited intake of alcohol, and coffee are not reasons to avoid breastfeeding.

On a separate note, it is important to point out that Kentucky is one of the unhealthiest states in our nation; but, a few healthy lifestyle choices could change this. First, eating normally proportioned helpings of nutritious foods including at least five fruits and vegetables a day can

lower weight and reduce heart disease and diabetes. Second, exercising about 30 minutes per day can lower blood pressure. Third, avoiding the use of tobacco products can reduce several types of cancer. Finally, making sure you get your needed preventive screenings can detect diseases early and greatly increase your chances for a positive health outcomes, while receiving your recommended vaccinations can prevent acquiring disease in the first place. Visit our website at www.LCDHD.org and click the “52 Weeks to Health” banner to learn more about each of these areas.