



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Among Nation's Best for Breastfeeding Rates



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BURLINGTON – Vermont is one of only four states that exceeded the Healthy People 2020 breastfeeding goals established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A CDC **2013 Breastfeeding Report Card** published today showed Vermont women breastfeed their babies at birth – three months – and six months at a rate well above the national average.

The report card is based on 2011 and 2012 National Immunization Surveys collected by the CDC.

Overall support for nursing babies was among the best in the nation as Vermont exceeded the national goals in five categories including rates of exclusive breastfeeding, where formula is not used as a supplement or substitute.

The Health Department encourages all women to breastfeed their babies within the first hour after delivery, and to continue breastfeeding for at least a year.

“The state’s hospitals and the breastfeeding support community have done an outstanding job,” said Breena Holmes, MD, director of Maternal and Child Health for the Health Department. “Breastfeeding is the most nutritious way to way to feed your baby, and it acts as a protection against chronic disease later in life including reducing childhood obesity.”

Vermont was second in the nation (90 percent) behind only New Hampshire (90.5 percent) for hospitals and birth centers where crucial skin-to-skin contact is initiated as the baby is placed into the mother’s arms, which is an important first step to successful nursing.

Ten of the twelve Vermont hospitals with birthing centers in Vermont were involved in a quality improvement initiative in 2012 to refine and enhance maternity care practices, which included improving the rates of breastfeeding in the early postpartum period.

“The early postpartum period is a critical time for lactating mothers.” Dr. Holmes said, “Immediate and continued contact between the mother and baby has been shown to increase the rates of exclusive breastfeeding, even months later.”

The Health Department continues to try and encourage more women to exclusively breastfeed their child for at least the first 6 months. Currently the rate is 25.9 percent (fourth highest in the nation).

To review the CDC report visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

For more information on the benefits of breastfeeding and local resources for nursing mothers, visit healthvermont.gov

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