



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Hospitals Work to Support Exclusive Breastfeeding

World Breastfeeding Week is Aug. 1 - 7

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Media Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health 802-863-7281

BURLINGTON – Ten of 12 Vermont hospitals are part of a project to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates, prevent childhood obesity and promote lifelong health.

Breastfeeding for at least nine months decreases a baby's odds of becoming overweight by more than 30 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

"Mothers who want to breastfeed need support in the hospital to reach their breastfeeding goal," said Karen Flynn, WIC program administrator for the Health Department. "Hospital policies, procedures and staff can have a great influence on mothers and babies as they begin to breastfeed, either helping or hindering their success."

More than 85 percent of Vermont mothers breastfeed in the hospital, one of the highest rates in the country. But by six months, only one in four are still exclusively breastfeeding their babies.

The Vermont Department of Health is working with hospitals to implement policies and practices that are known to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates. Research shows significant improvements when mothers of healthy infants experience a combination of five hospital practices:

- infants are breastfed within the first hour after birth
- infants stay in the same room with their mothers
- infants are fed only breast milk and receive no supplementation unless medically indicated
- infants do not use a pacifier
- mothers are given a telephone number to call for help with breastfeeding

The Health Department's division of Maternal and Child Health's Nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is leading the *10 Steps to Empower Mothers and Nurture Babies* project. The project goal is to help hospitals achieve the *10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, World Health Organization guidelines that have been consistently associated with successful breastfeeding.

This statewide quality improvement initiative focuses on increasing the number of Vermont hospitals with birth centers that use evidence-based maternity care practices as standards of care. The Vermont Child Health Improvement Project (VCHIP), the American Academy of Pediatrics, Vermont Chapter, and the Academy of Family Practitioners, Health Department district offices, local and statewide breastfeeding coalitions and mother/baby support services and resources are also project partners.

Participating hospitals use interdisciplinary teams to set process and outcomes goals focused on improving the hospital's Maternity Practices and Infant Nutrition and Care *(mPINC) scores, which will increase Vermont's statewide scores. Four collaborative goals have been set for all participating hospitals. Each hospital will also select individual measurable goals based on current practice, the mPINC scores of their facility and known gaps in care.

Vermont hospitals are working to establish a breastfeeding culture, which will provide a foundation for a sustained breastfeeding experience while working to accomplish WHO's *10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*.

Visit <http://HealthVermont.gov/YouCanDolt> to learn more about our Change the Landscape campaign, the importance of breastfeeding and health, and what individuals can do to support breastfeeding in their communities.

Visit <http://healthvermont.gov/wic/food-feeding/breastfeeding/friendly-employer-project.aspx> for information about Vermont's Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project.

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Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
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