Breastfeeding
Breast milk is the most precious gift a mother can give her baby. Breast milk is nutritionally perfect. Breast milk changes to meet the needs of a growing baby, something formula cannot do. A premature infant’s nutritional needs are different than a baby who was born at term. A mother’s body produces breast milk that that is a perfect balance for the premature baby. Human milk changes to meet the needs of a growing baby, something formula cannot do.

Human milk not only contains important nutrients, but provides protective factors. Human milk is natural and not synthetically made. There is no way to duplicate all of the nutrients that are necessary for baby in formula.
Breastfeeding rates
The prevalence of breastfeeding in the hospital reached an all time high in 2000:

68.4% initiation rate
31.4% breastfeeding at 6 months

(Source: Ross Mothers Survey, 2000)

The most current statistics indicate that the prevalence of breastfeeding in the hospital reached an all time high of 68.4% and at 6 months was 31.4%.

Initiation of breastfeeding was most common among mothers who are white, 35+ years of age and college educated.

The largest increases in the initiation of breastfeeding between 1990 and 2000 occurred among mothers who have been historically less likely to breastfeed. Black mothers, less than 20 years old and receiving WIC benefits. WIC is the Women, Infants and Children which is a nutrition education and supplemental food program. All pregnant women are encouraged to breastfeed. Breastfeeding education and support are provided during pregnancy and after delivery.
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1999 data</th>
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<td>In hospital:</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>At 6 months:</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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(Source: Ross Mothers Survey)
Healthy People 2010

• Increase the number of infants who are breastfed to at least 75% in the early postpartum period
• At least 50% continue breastfeeding at 6 months
• At least 25% of those infants who continue breastfeeding until age 1

Healthy People is the prevention agenda for the nation. It is a statement of national opportunities - a tool that identifies the most significant preventable threats to health and focuses on public and private sector efforts to address those threats. Healthy People is based on scientific knowledge and is used for decision making and for action. One of the goals is to achieve a breastfeeding initiation rate of 75%. At least 50% of those continue breastfeeding at 6 months. And at least 25% of those infants who continue breastfeeding until age 1.
In 1997, the AAP published “Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk”, a policy statement on breastfeeding. The AAP recommends that mothers breastfeed their infants for at least 12 months. Breastfeeding should continue after 12 months for as long as both infant and mother desire. Human milk is unique in providing the right balance for premature infants. The mother who has delivered a premature infant produces breast milk that is appropriate for a premature infant.
American Academy of Pediatrics

- Newborns should be nursed whenever they show signs of hunger, such as increased alertness or activity, mouthing or rooting.

Crying is a late indicator of hunger. Newborns should be nursed approximately 8 to 12 times every 24 hours until satiety, usually 10 to 15 minutes on each breast.
HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding

- Health care system
- The workplace
- Childcare facilities
- Public education and support

This blueprint was developed in 2000 by the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health. The Blueprint for Action introduces an action plan for breastfeeding based on education, training, awareness, support and research. Recognizing that breastfeeding rates are influenced by various factors, these recommendations suggest an approach in which all interested stakeholders come together to forge partnerships to promote breastfeeding. We must turn the recommendations into programs best suited for our own communities. Together we can shape a future in which mothers can feel comfortable and free to breastfeed their children without societal hindrances.
Breastfeeding support is particularly critical in the first few weeks postpartum as lactation is being established. All breastfeeding mothers must have access to lactation management support provided by trained physicians, nurses, lactations specialists, peer counselors, and other trained health care providers, especially during the first days and weeks postpartum. Hospitals and other maternity centers are encouraged to adopt the “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding”.
It is not enough to have a breastfeeding policy. It must be implemented. Mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed their baby as soon as possible after delivery.

Breastfeeding is a learned process. Mothers need encouragement and support about breastfeeding during their hospital stay.
Practices for Successful Breastfeeding Services

• Limited use of any food or drink other than human breast milk
• Rooming-in
• Breastfeeding on demand
• Limited use of pacifiers and artificial nipples
• Fostering of breastfeeding support groups and services

The staff should not encourage babies to stay in the nursery separated from mothers, but encourage breastfeeding by keeping the babies and moms together as much as possible.
The workplace environment should enable mothers to continue breastfeeding as long as the mother and baby desire. Prenatal lactation education specifically tailored for working women should be available. Adequate breaks, flexible work hours, job sharing and part-time work. Worksite programs that support breastfeeding will facilitate the continuation of breastfeeding after mothers return to their jobs.

Childcare facilities: There are a large number of infants enrolled in childcare and it is important that childcare facilities be supportive of breastfeeding mothers. Childcare centers should make accommodations for mothers who wish to breastfeed their children or have their children fed expressed milk at the facility.

Public education and support: all breastfeeding women and their partners need reliable and culturally appropriate sources of information and social support for breastfeeding. Women may receive education and support from lactation consultants or specialists and other mothers who have breastfed. Women may access information through books, web pages, hotlines, prenatal classes or mother to mother support groups.

Social support, particularly peer support, is critical for special populations with lower breastfeeding rates (African Americans, teen mothers)
Workplace

- Establish family and community programs that enable breastfeeding continuation when women return to work in all possible settings
- Encourage childcare facilities to provide quality breastfeeding support

It is possible for mothers returning to work or school to continue breastfeeding. There are breast pump rental stations where high quality electric breast pumps may be rented.

High quality breast pumps may be purchased from specialty stores or over the internet. A mother will express breast milk while she is away from her infant to maintain her milk supply. When she is with her infant she can directly breastfeed. A mother who delivers a premature infant will also need to use an electric breast pump until her baby is able to directly breastfeed. The expressed breast milk can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer to be used later.

Encourage childcare facilities to provide quality breastfeeding support. Mothers should be encouraged to bring breastmilk to feed their baby. Many mothers may want to come to the child care facility to breastfeed their baby during lunch or at breaks. Mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed their infant at the childcare facility.
Family and Community

• Encourage fathers and other family members to be actively involved throughout the breastfeeding experience
• Encourage the media to portray breastfeeding as normal, desirable, and achievable for women of all cultures and socioeconomic levels

Fathers and other family members should be actively involved in providing support the mother who is breastfeeding. For example, someone can bring the baby to the mother for the night time feedings, bathing the baby.
Research

• Improve the understanding of the health benefits of breastfeeding, especially in reducing the risk for chronic childhood diseases among disadvantaged infants and children
• Conduct research to better understand the role of fathers in promoting breastfeeding
Advantages for Infants

• Fewer ear infections
• Less incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
• Fewer respiratory infections
• Reduces the risk of developing insulin dependent diabetes mellitus

Not only does breastfeeding provide optimal nutrition for infants, but it provides protection from a variety of diseases.
Advantages for Infants

- Lower incidence of allergies and asthma
- Lower incidence of childhood lymphoma
- Decreases the risk of gastrointestinal infections
- Decreases the risk of Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC)
- Decreases the risk of urinary tract infections
Advantages

- Increased IQ scores later in childhood
- Enhanced neurodevelopmental performance
Advantages for Breastfeeding Mothers

- May experience increased self confidence
- Reduces the risk of uterine, ovarian and breast cancer
- Earlier return to prepregnancy weight
- Increased bone density
Economic Advantages

• Economic savings from cost of purchasing infant formula
• Reduction in health care costs
• Fewer sick visits and hospitalizations
• Reduced employee absenteeism
• Impacts the health of the infant not only now, but later in life
Barriers to Breastfeeding

Professional Barriers

• Lack of support or encouragement
• General lack of education among health professionals
• Lack of access to women to health professionals trained in lactation management
Public Education Barriers

- Modesty, embarrassment
- Interference/incompatibility with lifestyle
- Lifestyle restrictions
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of desire, motivation
- Negative misconceptions about breastfeeding
Health Care System Barriers

• Hospital environment

• Attitude of staff

• Free formula gift packs

The hospital should provide a positive breastfeeding environment. This can include pictures of breastfeeding mothers instead of mothers bottle feeding. Hospital grade electric pumps available for mother’s to use who have sick or premature infant.

The attitude of the staff is important. Mothers should be encouraged and supported in their decision to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is a learning process and all mothers and babies should be encouraged to breastfeed and support provided.

It is important that all staff members receive breastfeeding education and that breastfeeding is promoted throughout the entire health care system. For example, the breastfeeding mother who requires outpatient surgery should receive support to maintain lactation.

Free formula gift packs given to the mother in the hospital can undermine her decision to breastfeed. Even though the gift pack may contain breastfeeding information it implies that if you are breastfeeding at some time you will find you need to supplement. The longer the mother exclusively breastfeeds, the more benefits for mother and baby.
Breastfeeding Support

• Encourage support from family and friends
• Improve knowledge and education among women
• Improve post partum support services
• Provide mothers with role models who are breastfeeding or have breastfed
• Provide support to mothers returning to work and/or school

Many mothers encounter barriers prior to or during their breastfeeding experience. There are many things that we can do to help promote and encourage mothers with one of the most important health decisions she will make. Families should be encouraged to attend breastfeeding classes and included in any breastfeeding education the mother receives.

Women are becoming more educated about breastfeeding. There are many books and internet sites devoted to breastfeeding. Many of the websites have Lactation Consultants who will answer breastfeeding questions that a mother has via the internet.

There is a lack of post partum support services in the state. Few hospitals provide support groups for breastfeeding mothers. La Leche League has many local support groups available for breastfeeding mothers.

In other cultures breastfeeding is considered the norm so women have grown up with family members breastfeeding. In the US, many mothers who chose to breastfeed do not have a close family member that has breastfed. If this breastfeeding mother experiences a problem breastfeeding she has to turn to others outside of her family for help and support.

Many mothers do not realize that they can continue breastfeeding after returning to work or school. Education in this area is very important.
Breastfeeding Support

- Encourage mothers to delay introduction of solid food
- Realize that there are differences among mothers
- Identify family or cultural factors

Mothers should be encouraged to exclusively breastfeed for 6 months. At this point cereal and other foods are introduced slowly into the infant's diet. Identify family or cultural factors that can influence breastfeeding.
Breastfeeding Promotion

• World Breastfeeding Week August 1-7

• Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Alabama is celebrated in August

WBW-each year a theme is selected to promote breastfeeding worldwide.