

PRAM-O-GRAM

Fact Sheet Series: Number 9, 2008

Breastfeeding Is Best for Baby¹

- Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants, and most babies find it easier to digest than formula.
- Breastfed infants grow the way they should, including gaining less unnecessary weight, which may result in being less overweight later in life.
- Premature babies do better when breastfed.
- Breastfed babies score slightly higher on IQ tests, especially among babies born prematurely.

Breastfeeding Is Best for Mom Because It:¹

- Uses up calories, making it easier to lose the pounds of pregnancy.
- Helps the uterus get back to its original size and lessens bleeding a woman may have after giving birth.
- Lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, and the risk of osteoporosis after menopause.
- Saves time and money.
- Allows a mother to give her baby immediate satisfaction when he/she is hungry.
- Requires a mother to take quiet time for herself and her baby.
- Can help a mother bond with her baby. Physical contact can help newborns feel more secure, warm, and comforted.
- Can provide increased self-confidence and feelings of closeness and bonding with her infant.

Breastfeeding

Mothers who participated in the 2002 North Dakota Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitor System (PRAMS) survey provided information about their breastfeeding experiences. The National Women's Health Information Center website on breastfeeding declares that breastfeeding is "Best for baby. Best for mom." (see sidebar at left). Breastfeeding is also beneficial to society because it reduces health-care costs, contributes to the productivity of the workforce, and is better for the environment.¹

There are rare circumstances when breastfeeding may not be recommended, such as when the mother has certain diseases or is using illicit drugs.²



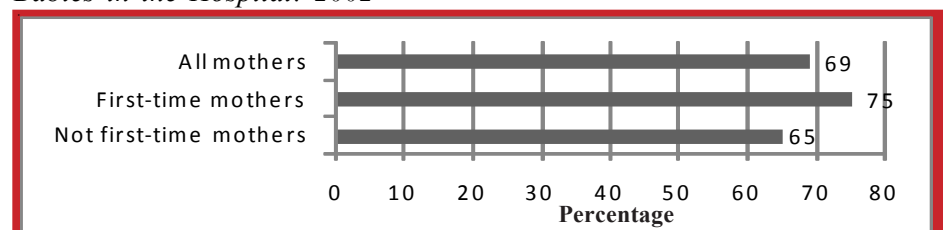
According to the U.S. Surgeon General, babies should be "fed with breast milk only – no formula – for the first 6 months of life" and it is "best to breastfeed for 12 months, or for as long as you and your baby wish." When the baby is 6 months old, solid foods can be introduced while breastfeeding continues. Not breastfeeding can carry certain health risks for the babies, including developing a wider range of infectious diseases and higher rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).¹

More than two-thirds of North Dakota mothers in 2002 breastfed their babies while in the hospital (69%); half of mothers breastfed in the first hour after birth (50%) and half of babies were fed only breast milk at the hospital (47%). Three in five babies stayed in the same room with the mother at the hospital (63%).

The vast majority of mothers were given information about breastfeeding in the hospital (88%) and were sent home with a gift pack that included formula (91%). Three in five mothers were told to breastfeed whenever the baby wanted (62%) and were given a telephone number to call for help with breastfeeding (63%). More than half of mothers indicated that hospital staff helped them learn how to breastfeed (57%).

The majority of women had given birth to a live baby before (57%), while 43 percent had not. Compared to women who had given birth to a live baby before, women who were first-time mothers had a higher prevalence of being given information about breastfeeding in the hospital, of the staff helping them learn how to breastfeed, of being told to breastfeed whenever the baby wanted, of being given a phone number to call for help with breastfeeding, and of breastfeeding in the hospital (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of North Dakota Mothers Who Breastfed Their New Babies in the Hospital: 2002



North Dakota mothers on breastfeeding:

"I feel breastfeeding is crucial in the development of a mother and her baby. Not only is it healthy for the baby, it is beneficial to the mother."

"I was very upset that the hospital gave my baby formula even though they knew I was planning on breastfeeding."

"I think breastfeeding should be promoted more. There is so much emphasis on feeding your baby the 'right' formula when all that effort should be going into 'the only milk for babies is breast milk.'"



More information about the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), North Dakota PRAMS 2002 data, and the PRAM-O-GRAM fact sheets is available online at www.ndsu.edu/sdc/ndprams.htm and www.ndhealth.gov.

Sources: Unless indicated otherwise, all data and quotes are from North Dakota PRAMS, 2002: www.ndsu.edu/sdc/ndprams.htm; 1. "Breastfeeding - Best for Baby. Best for Mom." The National Women's Health Information Center. www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/; 2. "When should a mother avoid breastfeeding?" The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/disease/contraindicators.htm

Breastfeeding, continued

Overall, 72 percent of mothers breastfed (or pumped breast milk) to feed the new baby. The prevalence of breastfeeding was lower among mothers who:

- Were American Indian (49%).
- Were unmarried (61%).
- Were recipients of Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (62%).
- Were recipients of Medicaid (64%).
- Had less than a four-year college degree (64%).
- Had previously given birth to a live baby (67%).
- Were younger than age 25 (69%).
- Had an unintended pregnancy (69%).

Six percent of mothers who breastfed their babies did so for less than one week, 35 percent breastfed one to 11 weeks, and 6 percent breastfed 12 to 18 weeks. Among mothers who did breastfeed, half were still breastfeeding at the time of the survey (53%). On average, babies were 15.9 weeks old at the time of the survey. The prevalence of still breastfeeding at the time of the survey was lower among mothers who:

- Were unmarried (34%).
- Were recipients of Medicaid (36%).
- Were American Indian (38%).
- Were recipients of Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (40%).
- Had an unintended pregnancy (41%).
- Had less than a four-year college degree (44%).
- Were younger than 25 (44%).
- Were first-time mothers (45%).
- Were working or in school at the time of the survey (47%).

The average age at which breastfed infants were first fed something other than breast milk was 5.2 weeks. One in five breastfed infants was fed something other than breast milk in the first week (22%), followed by an additional 10 percent at the age of 1 to 2 weeks, 22 percent at 3 to 6 weeks, 12 percent at 7 to 12 weeks, and 12 percent at 13 to 18 weeks. At the time of the survey, nearly one in four babies whose mothers breastfed had not been fed any food other than breast milk (23%).

Among mothers who did breastfeed but were not breastfeeding any longer at the time of the survey, barriers to continuing breastfeeding included that:

- She thought she wasn't producing enough milk (33%).
- She went back to work or school (30%).
- Milk alone did not satisfy baby (30%).
- Her baby had difficulty nursing (28%).
- Her nipples were sore, cracked or bleeding (20%).
- She needed someone else to feed the baby (15%).
- She felt it was the right time to stop breastfeeding (13%).
- She had too many other household duties (12%).
- She thought her baby was not gaining enough weight (7%).
- She became sick and could not breastfeed (7%).
- Her baby became sick and could not breastfeed (4%).
- Her husband or partner wanted her to stop breastfeeding (3%).
- There were other reasons (26%), including that the baby had bad reflux, she was on pain pills because of a surgery, she was depressed, she started smoking, and her milk dried up while her baby was in the hospital.