



Supporting breastfeeding

Dr Paul Martiquet, Medical Health Officer

Breastfeeding provides the original convenience

meal for babies. Not surprisingly it is also the best choice for

baby, too. World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is one way to recognize the value of providing the best available meal for babies. It encourages all of us to support a mother's choice to breastfeed.

We have long known that breastfeeding has positive health outcomes for both mother and infant. These include less chance of future obesity and higher IQ for baby, and for mom, less illness related time off work. "Circles of Support" for moms is the theme of the 2008 World Breastfeeding Week.

The circles of support are: Family & Social Network; Workplace & Employment; Response to Crisis or Emergency; Government & Legislation; and Healthcare. These have many overlaps and interactions—and at the center is the mother.

The benefits of breastfeeding for both infant and mother lead the Canadian Pediatric Society to recommend nothing but breastmilk for the first six months of life, and continued breastfeeding in combination with other foods for at least a year. However, a breastfeeding mother can face many challenges. Not all will hit the news as a recent story involving a national retailer did. Indeed, most are hidden, silent problems including having to cope with misinformation, finding a way to breastfeed while working, and the new mother overcoming doubts about her ability to breastfeed.

A mother needs to feel comfortable feeding her baby anytime anywhere no matter how the baby is be-

ing fed. As a community, we can help and encourage a mother and baby to be together and feed in any setting by embracing breastfeeding as a normal activity.

The key to successful breastfeeding is ongoing support for the mother. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action recommends that giving a mother support includes empathetic listening, basic, accurate, and timely information, skilled and practical help and encouragement.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF support the work of healthcare systems and healthcare workers through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a process which helps countries and healthcare facilities energize their efforts in supporting breastfeeding women. Already, one BC hospital has been accredited and others are working towards this goal.

There are many ways to contribute to healthy communities. Among them is supporting breastfeeding in any way we can. Maybe it is helping a neighbour, family member or employee as they support their baby. Whether you are a business person, healthcare provider, church, club or just a friend, you can help. It might be as simple as putting up a sign that says "Breastfeeding Welcome Here," offering a smile, or providing a bit of help and encouragement to a breastfeeding mother. As an employer, are you breastfeeding friendly? Think about it.

World Breastfeeding Week in British Columbia is October 1 to 7. What can you do to support a mom?

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