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Providing Information and Inspiration

National Breastfeeding Month serves to promote mom-baby benefits

The benefits of breastfeeding last a lifetime. As a result, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) and the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) are promoting their breastfeeding support services throughout the month of August: National Breastfeeding Month.

Did you know that:

- 85% of mothers want to breastfeed,
- 80% begin breastfeeding their baby, but only
- 30% reach their breastfeeding goals without support?

“Breastfeeding is something our bodies are meant to do, and breast milk is the best food to help babies grow and develop,” said Autumn Jurek, IBCLC and Personal Health Supervisor. “There’s so much more to breastfeeding than nutrition. There are many emotional and physical health benefits for both the lactating parent and the baby.”

In addition to helping the baby build a strong immune system, breastfeeding lowers the baby’s risk for short- and long-term illnesses such as asthma, childhood obesity, type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS. Breast milk also contains substances that naturally sooth the baby, and breast milk changes to meet the baby’s nutritional needs as they grow.

There are also health benefits for mom during this vulnerable time. Breastfeeding reduces the mother’s risk of ovarian and breast cancers. It’s also a great way to form a secure bond with your baby and can even lower your risk for developing postpartum depression.

While breastfeeding is natural, it often comes with many questions and challenges. BLDHD provides extensive support programs for mothers as they breastfeed. Parents choose the level of support they desire. For example, breastfeeding counselors can visit them in the hospital, in the health department clinics or at home. They can answer questions over the phone or by text.

“We’re here to help moms with whatever they need,” said Michelle Klein, Director of Personal Health. “Early in pregnancy, mothers set goals about breastfeeding, whether it’s to breastfeed for a month, the recommended six months, or a year. We provide the support they need to meet their goals by answering questions, providing information, helping to resolve breastfeeding problems, and even offering assurance. Whatever they need.”

Throughout August and early September, the [U.S. Breastfeeding Committee](#) has designated National weekly observances with themes and information for all moms. They are:

- Aug. 1-7 World Breastfeeding Week
- Aug. 8-14 Indigenous Milk Medicine Week
- Aug. 15-21 Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week
- August 25-31 Black Breastfeeding Week
- Sept. 5-11 Semana de La Lactancia Latina

To learn more about the history of breastfeeding and how it’s making a cultural comeback, watch this four-minute video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zhx-R6p1xAQ>.

To learn more about breastfeeding supports, visit www.bldhd.org/breastfeeding-resources/.

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Proud member of the [Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance](#): 7 local health departments advocating for public health.