

Connecticut WIC Program:

Consistent Breastfeeding Education Messages: Exclusive Breastfeeding

Why is this important?

[American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) recommends](#) exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, then supports continued breastfeeding for the first year or beyond as long as mutually desired by mother and baby. Further, WIC policies supporting exclusive breastfeeding increases the chances of a mom to meet these established goals.

<https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/wic-breastfeeding-policy-and-guidance>

WIC's Goal:

Encourage moms to initiate breastfeeding within the first hours of life and to support them to exclusively breastfeed as long as desired.

Learning Objectives- After participating in a group session or individual counseling the participant will:

1. Identify three benefits of exclusive breastfeeding.
2. Understand the skills necessary to build and maintain milk supply, i.e.: preferably no artificial nipples, bottles, or pacifiers in the first month.
3. Learn where to go for additional support within the community to exclusively breastfeed.
4. Explain how milk production works.

Prior to education:

Using open-ended questions, assess attitudes about breastfeeding to assist with goal setting

- What are your thoughts on exclusively breastfeeding your baby?
- How long do you plan on breastfeeding?
- Do you have any concerns about breastfeeding?
- Tell me how your family feels about your decision to breastfeed?

Provide affirmation:

- It's great that you're thinking about exclusively breastfeeding your baby! It has a lot of benefits for both you and your baby!
- Many moms have those concerns about exclusive breastfeeding. WIC is here to help you navigate those and help you with your plan to exclusively breastfeed.

Key Educational Messages: Breastfeeding gives babies a healthy start in life. But it's not just good for babies—it's good for moms, too.

Breastfeeding benefits for mom:

- Helps you develop a strong bond with your baby.
- Is convenient and economical. May need to elaborate.
- Reduces bleeding after you deliver through promoting uterine contractions which helps you recover quicker.
- Offers protection against breast, cervical and ovarian cancers later in life.
- May assist with postpartum weight loss. Some women might not see immediate weight loss benefits.

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Breastfeeding benefits for baby:

- Research suggests that breastfeeding lowers your baby's risk of certain infections and diseases, including these:
- Ear infections
- Asthma
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Childhood obesity
- Eczema
- Type 2 diabetes
- Childhood leukemia
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Breast milk is easily digestible, and colostrum helps the digestive system grow with healthy bacteria.
- Breast milk changes as your baby grows, which is optimal for their growth and development, even during times of illness. Formula does not change with growth.

Strategies to help moms reach exclusive breastfeeding goals:

- **Use the Make a Plan checklist to review key actions to get breastfeeding off to a good start.**
- Discuss plans to exclusively breastfeed family, health care providers and hospital staff.
- Take a breastfeeding class prior to delivery. <https://www.readysbabyonline.com/>
- Look for a pediatrician with an IBCLC or CLC on staff.
- Learn what the WIC agency offers for breastfeeding support i.e.: IBCLC's, CLC's, peer counseling, etc.
- Attend a support group after delivery.
- Review supply and demand, signs of a good milk supply (goals for wet and dirty diapers) and normal infant feeding behavior (frequent feeds).
- Share link <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/video-milk-supply>

Postpartum practices that support exclusive breastfeeding:

- Rooming in with baby.
- Skin to skin immediately after delivery.
- Breastfeed within the first hour of delivery.
- Breastfeed on demand.
- No bottles or pacifiers unless medically indicated.
- Make a plan. Have the contact for your WIC office, IBCLC or CLC on hand for support and/or questions.
- See a lactation professional to make sure adequate milk transfer has occurred.
- Don't have formula in the house – be confident in breastfeeding.

Discuss mom's fears about her ability to produce an adequate milk supply.

- The amount of milk a mother produces depends on the frequency and effectiveness of milk removal from the breast. (Supply and demand). Share link <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/video-milk-supply>
- Supplemental feeding, especially in the early days interferes with a mother's milk supply.
- Artificial nipples on bottles and pacifiers require different movements of the tongue, lips, and jaw that may make it difficult for infants to easily go back to the mother's nipple and breast.

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How WIC Supports Exclusively Breastfeeding Moms:

- Assist mom in meeting her long-term breastfeeding goals.
- WIC breastfeeding food packages include additional foods for mom, with the package for fully breastfeeding especially beneficial. The extra food and support from WIC staff to continue breastfeeding exclusively are provided because it is recognized that the mother's breast milk is priceless.
- The introduction of formula begins the weaning process. Mother's growing milk supply develops in response to the amount of milk removed from the breast. If there is less demand for milk, the breasts will make less milk.
- Exclusively (fully) breastfeeding participants receive the most food out of any other WIC category of participants, breastfeed babies at six months will receive double amounts of fruit, vegetables, as well as pureed meats for infants.
- Skilled professionals and paraprofessionals available for support: IBCLC's, CLC's and Peer Counselors

Resources:

- USDA WIC Breastfeeding <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/breastfeeding-benefits>
- Ready, Set, Baby <https://www.readysetbabyonline.com/>
- Make a Plan checklist (English and Spanish) https://www.itsworthitct.org/uploads/7/6/2/7/76278053/make_a_plan_checklist_englishandspanish.pdf
- La Leche League International www.llli.org
- *The Breastfeeding Mother's Guide to Making More Milk*, D. West, IBCLC & L. Marasco, MA., IBCLC
- *Breastfeeding You Can Do It!*, Pamela Wiggins, IBCLC (video)
- *Baby-Led Breastfeeding... The Mother-Baby Dance*, Christina M. Smillie, MD (video)
- Refer to local agency breastfeeding resource guide

Activities:

- Provide mom(s) with the It's Worth It! Make a Plan checklist. Intent of this activity is to help expectant mothers plan for breastfeeding success and share their wishes about breastfeeding their baby with their support system. This checklist helps keep track of the actions taken to inform the people who will support the dyad after delivery as well as a space to list contacts and resources. *It also addresses the early postpartum period, after hospital discharge and helps moms delegate some household and childcare tasks to her support network.* Encourage the participant to review the action items, keep track items that are completed and share it with her team so that everyone knows how to help her best.

References:

- World Health Organization Exclusive Breastfeeding http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/exclusive_breastfeeding/en/
CDC Breastfeeding Recommendations <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>