

Breastfeeding: not for women only

A woman's body is made for it. Babies know the routine soon after they are born. In fact, Mother Nature so wanted women to nourish their newborns with breastmilk, she created a whole host of benefits particular to this form of feeding.

If you're past your child-rearing years, or if you happen to be male, you may be tempted to stop reading. But, the truth is, this is one subject that is everybody's business.

The benefits of breastfeeding have far-reaching effects that, in the end, benefit society as a whole.

Breastmilk gives babies the best possible start in life. In fact, it's the first step for a lifetime of healthy eating. It gives babies all the nutrients they need plus many other long-term health benefits. Research proves that exclusively breastfed babies have a lower risk of developing diabetes, cancers, and heart disease later in life, compared with formula-fed infants. New research also suggests a link to lower obesity rates.

There are proven health benefits for mom, too: breastfeeding can deter the development of breast and ovarian cancer, for example.

Creating supportive environments for breastfeeding moms is part of the message behind a new KFL&A Public Health initiative called Motiv8. This program is also about eating well, getting fit, and living life. The Motiv8 vision is that all adults in KFL&A will have the supportive environments they need to increase awareness, promote motivation, and build skills to improve their health by eating well and being active.

"It's important that women who breastfeed receive support in homes, workplaces, schools, and public places in their community," said Jennifer Hurst Fraser, public health nurse and lactation consultant. "We are a breastfeeding culture. From data collected in 2008 in KFL&A, over 87 percent of mothers reported that they were planning to breastfeed their baby."

KFL&A Public Health offers a range of breastfeeding support programs, including Babytalk Drop-ins, Breastfeeding Classes,

the Child & Babytalk Line, and Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, where new mothers just home from hospital can opt for a visit from a public health nurse.

The Breastfeeding Buddy Program is another KFL&A Public Health program popular with new moms. "We are all trained volunteers who have breastfed our own babies for at least six months and we offer telephone support to moms who are breastfeeding," said Breastfeeding Buddy, Steacy Morrison.



A mother of two daughters, Morrison relies on support from her family and friends (she is currently breastfeeding her five-month-old) and says she feels that women need to know that help is just a phone call away.

"I became a Breastfeeding Buddy because I wanted to help other moms who are breastfeeding and may have questions and concerns along the way. If they do run into a challenge, I can help talk them through it by sharing my own experiences."

Hurst Fraser said that "it really makes a difference if mothers and their support people learn about breastfeeding and community supports before the baby is born. This improves the mother's confidence which research has shown is vital to successful breastfeeding."

"With positive support, breastfeeding is a wonderful experience for mother and baby," said Morrison.



An initiative by KFL&A Public Health

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