

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

August 16, 2016

FLORIDA HEALTH PROMOTES BREASTFEEDING DURING WORLD BREASTFEEDING MONTH

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Port St. Joe, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Gulf County is highlighting the importance of breastfeeding during National Breastfeeding Month. Breastfeeding plays a critical role in healthy development from the very beginning of a child's life.

"One of the most highly effective preventive measures a mother can take to protect the health of her infant is to breastfeed," said Marsha Lindeman, Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Gulf and Franklin Counties. "The health department has Certified Lactation Counselors available to assist pregnant mothers as well as breastfeeding support services offered through our Healthy Start program. Additionally, our Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program continues to provide free breastfeeding classes in Port St. Joe and Wewahitchka."

Earlier this year, the department launched the Florida Healthy Babies initiative and has invested nearly two million dollars in helping hospitals around the state promote "Baby Steps to Baby Friendly" in order to support mothers in practicing exclusive breastfeeding for their infants. Breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

DOH-Gulf recognizes that the success rate among mothers who want to breastfeed can be greatly improved through active support from their families, friends, communities, clinicians, and employers. Gulf County Community Health Improvement Partners have incorporated breastfeeding support strategies into the county's three year plan. Additionally, a Healthy Moms and Babies meeting was held in June and open to the community to identify opportunities to enhance prenatal support and connect pregnant mothers to local breastfeeding resources.

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, mothers need supportive maternity leave policies, flexible work hours, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply.

For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556 or visit www.FloridaWIC.org. To learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding visit www.Illi.org or www.flbreastfeeding.org.

For more information about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly visit the Florida Healthiest Weight [website](#).

For resources on breastfeeding and print outs for working moms, visit our activity page [here](#).

About Healthiest Weight Florida

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. To learn more about how to be active and make nutritious food choices visit www.healthiestweightflorida.com.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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