

Governor Whitmer declares August as National Breastfeeding Month
Native Breastfeeding Week is Aug. 8-14
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Week is Aug. 15-21
Black Breastfeeding Week is Aug. 25-31

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan is committed to encouraging a strong foundation for life in all infants by supporting breastfeeding mothers for the first year of their child's life and beyond. Breastfeeding is a public health imperative central to successful health equity strategies that confront racism, classism and sexism which are the root causes of inequities — and combatting these are a key strategy in reducing maternal and infant mortality. Due to this, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is declaring August 2021 as Breastfeeding Awareness Month.

Disparities in breastfeeding rates and other maternal and infant health outcomes are most drastic and evident for Black and Indigenous families than for other Michigan families. Increased efforts highlighting increased support to breastfeeding are part of Gov. Whitmer's [Healthy Moms Healthy Babies](#) initiative.

“During Breastfeeding Awareness month this August, which includes Native Breastfeeding Week and Black Breastfeeding Week, we recommit ourselves to pursue equity for breastfeeding moms, including additional support and resources for Black and Native breastfeeding mothers,” said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. “We are dedicated to broadening public understanding of the critical impact breastfeeding has on improving the health of infants and mothers and reducing infant mortality rates within minority communities.”

Breastfeeding provides countless benefits to the nursing infant including easy digestion, production of antibodies, and reduced risk of infections and childhood obesity, and offers faster recovery from birth and reduced risk for postpartum hemorrhage and uterine cancer to the breastfeeding mother.

Ways to support breastfeeding include advocating for paid maternity leave and adequate pumping time while at work and school, and by bolstering [Baby Friendly](#) hospitals. National Breastfeeding Month is also a time to highlight under-resourced communities where families do not have equal access to support, care and education.

Although 86.9% of Michigan families initiate breastfeeding, only 58% are still breastfeeding at three months, and there are barriers such as lack of access to supportive healthcare and childcare providers, and lack of paid work leave that leads to early weaning. Additionally, there are fewer lactation professionals from communities of color.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black infants are 20% less likely to have ever received breast milk than any other race. In Michigan, seven of every 1,000 babies born die by age one, and among Black babies, the number is more than double. Between 80 and 90 maternal deaths occur each year with Black women dying 2.4% more often.

“Proper nutrition for infants is critical for their growth and development, and it is important for hospitals, business, communities and coalitions to work together to provide consistent support for breastfeeding mothers in Michigan,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services chief deputy for health. “Supporting breastfeeding is about the health of our entire community, so it is important that businesses and

communities implement policies and provide an environment that supports a family's breastfeeding goals."

Michigan is committed to encouraging to improving outcomes for breastfeeding mothers and helping community health workers such as community-based doulas and the WIC Peer Counseling support program to help diversify lactation support and increase breastfeeding rates in local communities across the state.

The State of Michigan WIC program is celebrating National Breastfeeding Month with the theme, "Why WIC for Breastfeeding?"

WIC supports breastfeeding in the following ways:

- Free, unlimited access to lactation consultants and breastfeeding peer counselors.
- Training to all WIC staff to support prenatal and breastfeeding families.
- Breastfeeding clients get more WIC foods than non-breastfeeding clients, including canned fish, and are able to stay on the program longer.
- At 6 months, breastfed babies receive infant meats and more fruits and vegetables.
- Many WIC clinics offer telehealth appointments.
- WIC offers a breastfeeding warmline available seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 833-MIWICBF (833-649-4223).

For additional information, visit the [Michigan Breastfeeding Network](#).

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