

BREASTFEEDING Connections

December 2021

This newsletter is intended to be viewed online in order to access the hyperlinks. In addition to receiving it via email, you can access the electronic version on our [website](#).

Inside This Issue

The Impact of COVID-19 Vaccination on Breastfeeding

“I’m worried that if I receive the COVID-19 vaccine, it will harm my baby.” Does this sound familiar? Lactating parents across the country have expressed fear and anxiety about getting immunized against COVID-19. These feelings are understandable! After all, parents only want what’s best for their children.

The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) has published articles regarding the impact of COVID-19 vaccinations and breastfeeding, which could be shared with concerned parents. One study conducted by Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, School of Medicine, surveyed 4,455 breastfeeding parents who received the COVID-19 vaccine. This study reported only 1.7% (77 individuals) indicated a negative impact on breastfeeding. These impacts were associated with common symptoms of receiving the vaccine and were found to have minimal disruption in lactation. A second study conducted by the University of California San Diego studied the children of 180 women post vaccination. No serious adverse events were reported for their infants for either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. However, some women reported a slight reduction in milk supply following the first and second dose of Moderna. This study concluded that the data reassures the safety of vaccination in lactating women and their children.

A recent study conducted by the University of Florida included 21 lactating participants who had never had COVID-19 and were eligible for vaccination. Subjects’ milk was tested three times: before vaccination and after the first and second dose. Researchers found that there was a 100-fold increase of immunoglobulin A antibodies after the second dose. In addition, these antibodies were still present in their frozen milk! Researchers emphasized that these findings are not meant to stress parents who are not able to breastfeed, but hope the findings encourage more people to get vaccinated.



What’s absolutely certain is that more research is necessary to confirm the impact of COVID-19 vaccination on breastfeeding. However, conclusions from these studies have given us hope that the risks to parents and their children are pretty low. So, here’s the big question—how can WIC staff support parents who question whether they should get vaccinated or not? Acknowledge their fears, consider their preferences and provide information on what the research says so parents can make an educated decision.

Ivanov, Danielle. “Breast milk of vaccinated mothers contains COVID-19 antibodies, study shows”. *USA Today*, 4 September 2021. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/09/04/moms-covid-vaccine-could-pass-antibodies-children-breast-milk-study-university-florida/5715224001/>.

McLaurin-Jiang, Skyler & Garner, Christine D., & Kruttsch, Kaytlin, & Hale, Thomas W. 2021. “Maternal and Child Symptoms Following COVID-19 Vaccination Among Breastfeeding Mothers”. *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine*, 16(9). <https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2021.0079>.

Bertrand, Kerri, & Honerkamp-Smith, Gordon, & Chambers, Christina D. “Maternal and Child Outcomes Reported by Breastfeeding Women Following Messenger RNA COVID-19 Vaccination”. *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine*, 16(9). <https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2021.0169>.

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This newsletter is prepared for Michigan WIC Staff to help them support breastfeeding families.

FORMULA VS. BREAST MILK: THE BATTLE AGAINST FORMULA WEBSITES

For many parents, breastfeeding can be a very real challenge. WIC has been there to reinforce the power and benefits of human milk. “Do I *want* to breastfeed?” and “*Can* I breastfeed?” are thoughts our parents ponder. To add to the confusion and misinformation, formula manufacturers may be taking advantage of the insecurities parents face with breastfeeding/chestfeeding by advertising messages and images that discourage breastfeeding/chestfeeding.

A recent research article published by Cambridge University Press evaluated messaging about infant feeding on breast milk substitute manufacturer websites and compare information and portrayals of breastfeeding with that of infant formula feeding. Manufacturer websites evaluated included Similac, Enfamil, Gerber, Earth’s Best and Happy Baby. Researchers found these websites contained more messaging about breastfeeding than formula, but were significantly more likely to mention the benefits of formula (44%) over breast milk (<26%). These websites included favorable statements for formula, such as providing brain, neural and gastrointestinal benefits. Furthermore, 40% of breastfeeding content was aimed at breastfeeding complications (i.e. sore nipples). Some websites contained images displaying the ease of formula feeding and other images portraying breastfeeding difficulties. This article concluded that formula manufacturers are encouraging their product, formula, and discouraging breastfeeding through online messaging. Health professionals should discourage their patients from visiting formula company websites. The US government should consider regulation of misleading claims, and formula companies should refrain from providing breastfeeding advice.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Why Enfamil®?

When it comes to making important choices about your baby's nutrition, there's nothing like a recommendation from a trusted source. Whether it comes from your pediatrician, the hospital where your baby was born or another mom, using Enfamil gives you the confidence you've made the best choice for your baby.

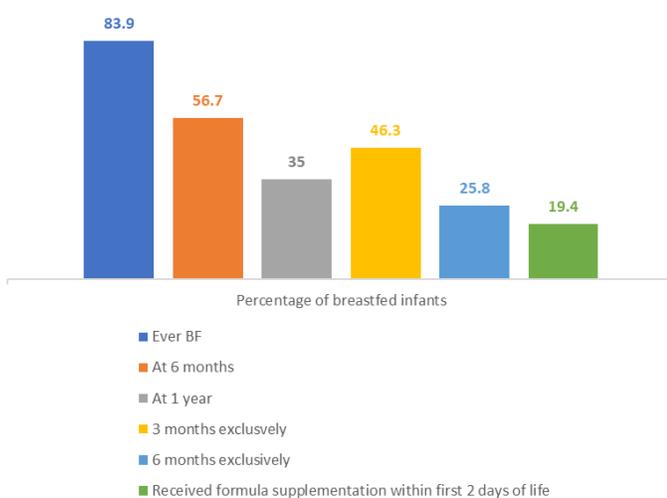
Image captured from Enfamil's website.



What can WIC Staff do? Fight the battle! Encourage WIC participants to seek support from WIC health professionals to answer infant feeding-related questions. Discourage them from seeking information from formula websites that may mislead them and give them the wrong impression of human milk vs. formula. Finally, be sure to promote breastfeeding in your clinic environment!

Pomeranz, Jennifer L., & Chu, Xiangying, & Groza, Oana, & Cohodes, Madeline, & Harris, Jennifer. “Breastmilk or infant formula? Content analysis of infant feeding advice on breastmilk substitute manufacturer websites”. *Public Health Nutrition*, First View, 14 September 2021, pp. 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980021003451>.

National Immunization Survey 2019-2020



KEY BREASTFEEDING INDICATORS FOR INFANTS BORN IN 2018

The National Immunization Survey (NIS) has the newest breastfeeding data available based on its 2019-2020 Survey among U.S. infants born in 2018. You can take a closer look at lactation trends for children born between 2011-2018 by visiting the CDC's [website](#).

PEER COUNSELOR Q & A

Dear Winnie,

Breast is best, right? So how do I convince a pregnant client who wants to formula feed?

Signed,

Sensational Michigan Peer Counselor

Dear Sensational PC,

Yes, I understand your dilemma. As the wonderful Peer you are, I know how much you want to help persuade each client that human milk is the perfect source of nutrition for their child. We all know that parents have the freedom to choose... but what we don't know is what influenced them to make their decision. That, my dear Peer, is where you come in!

Set the tone of the discussion:

- Offer congratulations for her pregnancy with warmth, kindness and authenticity.
- Be respectful, positive and always ask permission when offering information and suggestions.

Affirm your client's feelings with statements, such as:

- "No matter which path you decide, you will still be a fantastic parent."
- "Every parent's breastfeeding journey is different. It's understandable you are nervous."

Use probing questions, such as:

- "Can you tell me more about your decision to use formula?"
- "What have you heard about breastfeeding/chestfeeding?"

Then, ask permission to share information:

- "Would you be open to talking about breastfeeding?"
- "Is it okay if I share some information with you that might help settle your fears?"

Helpful tips:

- Focus on earning their respect and trust. Establish rapport and let them know you care. Once accomplished, parents may be more willing to listen and/or consider what you have to say.
- Many parents make an uninformed decision to use formula. Offer to clear up their misconceptions, but try not to overwhelm them with a lot of information.
- Let clients know that breastfeeding isn't all or nothing. Any amount of milk is better than none.
- Reinforce the extra benefits offered to WIC breastfeeding clients, such as the bigger food package, another six months of benefits, and access to an IBCLC if needed!
- Establish yourself as a support system no matter what she decides. Even if she chooses to formula feed, she may still need support with drying up her milk comfortably.

In recognition of Winnie's contributions to the Peer Counselor Program from 2001-2021, we are continuing the "Dear Winnie" column in her name. Written by Kristina Doyle.

Listen, Observe, Validate, Empower.

REFLECTIONS ON NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH

National Breastfeeding Month 2021 was a time to recognize all the ways WIC supports breastfeeding. Between yard signs, PopSockets, press releases, social media, and honest conversation, WIC highlighted its evidence-based, multi-layered, relational care for Michigan's breastfeeding families. WIC illuminated underserved populations and celebrated the advances we have made in increasing breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity and duration, while acknowledging how far we still have to go.

District 10 took the theme "Why WIC for Breastfeeding?" literally and sent postcards to their clients, inviting them to share how WIC has impacted their feeding journey. The responses sum up why we do what we do:

"WIC has access to things other than food to support breastfeeding."

"WIC has given me a level of confidence I would not have had otherwise."

"WIC provides one-on-one support and encouragement/praise."

"The healthy foods and fruits/veggies nourish me and baby."

"WIC has motivated me to keep going when breastfeeding is tough."

"Knowing there is someone there to offer advice when needed is great moral support."

"They call often just to check in and see if I have questions. It helps me feel not so alone during this journey."

"WIC has helped me navigate the ins and outs of nursing through 3 kids. Without their support, I wouldn't have made it 2+ years each!"

"Every question I have gets answered. I am continuously reminded how great breastfeeding is and how great I am doing!"

"WIC provided me with a hand pump, a car charger, and milk storage bags when I returned to work."

"The support from WIC has relieved a lot of my worries. And, the food has been so helpful."

"When my baby was born, I struggled a lot with breastfeeding. I felt like a terrible parent because I couldn't produce enough. My WIC Peer Counselor helped me so very much."

"If my Peer Counselor was unable to assist me personally, she would send me to someone who could. They have helped me with things from oversupply to latch, to needed pump parts. And, they are just so personable and friendly."

"I am so thankful for having an LC available to answer any questions/concerns I may have. I don't know if I would still be breastfeeding without the support."

"The addition of support given emotionally and financially has helped me immensely on my breastfeeding journey."



BREASTFEEDING STAFF SPOTLIGHT

The Annual Peer Update highlighted and thanked the following staff for their 10 years with the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program.

Rachel Jenner ♦ Erica McLeod ♦ Cheryl Polk ♦ Melissa Rebman
Kelly Rutz ♦ Kristen Sytek ♦ Colleen Unsal



Rachelle Jenner
(InterCare)



Kristen Sytek
(DHD 10)



Melissa Rebman
(Western UP)



Erica McLeod
(Washtenaw County)



Colleen Unsal
(DHD 10)



Cheryl Polk, (center)
(Detroit Health Department)



Kelly Rutz
(InterCare)



Special recognition goes to **Danica Howard** who transitioned from the MSU Extension BFI program to the WIC Peer Counselor Program in 2015 with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. She has served in the Peer Counselor role for 16 years and became an IBCLC in 2010! Danica has stated that she takes the responsibility of doing this essential work very seriously and enjoys nurturing and supporting families as they grow, especially those that are “repeat customers.”



EQUITY AND DIVERSITY STATE UPDATES



State WIC DEI Committee members were enrolled in a six-week course called Brave Talks. Facilitators from the Berrien County Health Department had open and honest discussions with committee members surrounding structural racism and how to break down barriers to address social determinants of health affecting communities of color. The members plan to use the information in the future to serve clients with an equity lens to assist in improving health outcomes.

State WIC has plans to develop a Client Advisory Council to improve DEI efforts to meet our client's needs.

If you are a WIC breastfeeding provider and identify as a person of color, please reach out to Dionne Moore-Smith at MooreSmithD@michigan.gov to join our Breastfeeding Supporters of Color Network.

Local Agency Honors

The following agencies were recognized for their exemplary breastfeeding services by receiving a Gold Breastfeeding Awards of Excellence (formerly Loving Support Awards):

- District Health Department #10
- Health Department of Northwest Michigan
- Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency (OLHSA)

A link to review the Power Point presentation for recipients of the awards within the entire Mid-Western region may be viewed [here](#).



WHAT A BREASTFEEDING MOM'S BOOBS MEAN

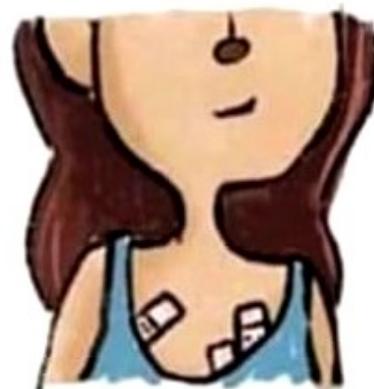
A non-exhaustive guide by ANNA DENISE FLOOR © 2019



BABY SLEPT THROUGH THE NIGHT
(NO touching!)



GROWTH SPURT
(buy me coffee!)



TEETHING



FORGOT TO SWITCH SIDES



HEARD A BABY CRY ON THE RADIO
(three blocks down the road)



LOST THE NAIL CLIPPERS
(again)

Permission to use granted from Anna Denise Floor 9/23/2021.
Check out her Instagram page. <https://www.instagram.com/annadenisefloor/?hl=en>

2021 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Visit the [Provider Education](#) section of the MDHHS WIC Staff Breastfeeding page. There are a variety of webinars and conferences available here.



Cartoon of parent breastfeeding their infant.

ACADEMY OF BREASTFEEDING MEDICINE

State WIC has purchased a subscription to *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM)* that is accessible for all WIC staff. We have full access to all of the journal articles for the current year and the previous 5 years.

Click [here](#) to log in

Email: Mdhhs_wicbreastfeeding@michigan.gov

Username: MDHHS_WICbreastfeeding

Password (Case Sensitive): MichiganWIC!

To search for specific topics, there is an advanced search option located within Breastfeeding Medicine. You can do a keyword search in the title, author, keywords, abstract or affiliation fields. Be sure to type in and then select “Breastfeeding Medicine” in the “Published In” field.

Another, more focused, search engine can be found on the Single Citation Search page where you can search by author and/or title words.

Questions/Comments? E-mail: CyrulM@michigan.gov

