

# Breastfeeding: A Natural Way to Better Health

## Health Facts

African American babies are 2.3 times more likely to **die in their first year** than non-Hispanic whites.

African American women are 40% more likely to **die from breast cancer** than non-Hispanic whites.

African American babies are twice as likely to **die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** than non-Hispanic white babies.

African Americans are twice as likely to be **diagnosed with diabetes** as non-Hispanic whites<sup>1</sup>, and are also more likely to have complications from diabetes.

African Americans are more likely to be **overweight and obese**, and to develop related diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, than non-Hispanic whites.

African American children are almost 4 times more likely to visit the emergency department for asthma and are 3 times more likely to **die from asthma-related** causes than non-Hispanic whites.

## Why Breastfeed?

Low rates of breastfeeding in the United States contribute to almost 1,000 child deaths, and many more cases of illness, every year.

Almost 5,000 cases of breast cancer could be prevented in the United States every year if more women breastfed.

Babies who were never breastfed are 56% more likely to die of SIDS than breastfed infants.

Infants who were never breastfed are 64% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than breastfed infants.

Children who were not breastfed are 32% more likely to be obese than children who were breastfed.

Children who were not breastfed and have a family history of asthma are 67% more likely than children who were breastfed to develop asthma. (35% more likely with no family history.)

## Breastfeeding Matters!

Recent studies found that if 90 percent of families breastfed – without giving formula – for the first 6 months of baby's life, nearly 1,000 infant deaths could be stopped.

Breastfed babies are healthier and get sick less often, saving families money from medical care costs. That could save the U.S. as much as \$13 billion per year.

Studies also show that breastfeeding mothers have less breast cancer, less high blood pressure and fewer heart attacks than formula-feeding moms.

“It's such a short period of time in a child's life that you are going to be breastfeeding, so let mom do her thing.”  
— Laila Ali, African American celebrity who supports breastfeeding



<sup>1</sup> <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?lvl=3&lvlID=4&ID=2826>



# Support a Sister

Lack of breastfeeding support and the embarrassment to breastfeed in public are two of the greatest barriers to breastfeeding in the African American community. A little support goes a long way. Here is how you can help support breastfeeding sisters in your community:

- Learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding for children, women, families, and our environment, and share with a pregnant friend or family member.
- Support a mother's decision to breastfeed. Let her know that she is giving her baby the best. Encourage her to take things one day at a time.
- Be her cheerleader and compliment her often. This will help build her confidence.
- Only say positive things about her breastfeeding. (The slightest hint of negativity can easily destroy a mother's self-confidence.)
- Call your breastfeeding friend or family member frequently after her baby arrives to see how things are going. If she is having difficulty or pain, encourage and assist her to get breastfeeding help as soon as she needs to.
- If you see a mother breastfeeding in public, approach her and tell her what a great mom you think she is for breastfeeding her baby. Or, at the very least, give her a big smile of approval or a thumbs-up.
- If a friend or family member needs to breastfeed her baby in public, show her support by sitting and talking with her as she nurses. If she keeps eye contact with you, she will be less likely to notice others around her.
- Don't give bottles or pacifiers as baby gifts. Buy her a breastfeeding book or shawl instead.

**A mother is entitled to breastfeed her baby in any location in which the mother is entitled to be under the provisions of Chapter 165, Texas Health and Safety Code.**

**For additional information on breastfeeding, call 1 (855) 550-6667 or visit:**

<http://www.breastmilkcounts.com/>

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural/>

