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### **MOTHERS GET BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT THROUGH WIC**

It's no secret that mothers want healthy, happy babies.

Breastfeeding has contributed to healthier and happier babies from the start, and according to articles in top research journals *Pediatrics* and *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, some benefits last into adulthood. Babies who are breastfed have fewer allergies, earaches, weight problems, tooth decay and upset stomachs. Breastfed babies also tend to have straighter teeth and are at a lowered risk of developing asthma, breast cancer, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and obesity later in life. Breast milk also contains nutritional components that are natural tranquilizers for babies, according to *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Breastfed babies have fewer incidences of diarrhea and constipation, better vision, and stronger immune systems with fewer colds, ear infections, illnesses overall, and fewer hospitalizations than formula-fed babies.

Breast milk provides all the nutrients babies need, and in the right amounts – and it's always ready! For mothers, breastfeeding takes away the need to buy, carry, heat, and measure infant formula, making it easier to pack for outings, and making nighttime feedings easier.

All these benefits may come with challenges. New mothers can experience soreness, concerns about supply, situations where the infant may not latch onto the breast well, or having a blocked mammary duct. In public, it may be difficult to find places where moms feel comfortable nursing, and some mothers may feel pressured to use formula or can have concerns about breastfeeding and the workplace. Although there may be some challenges, benefits of breastfeeding far outweigh the downsides.

That's where the breastfeeding peer counselors who are part of Catawba County Public Health's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program can help mothers and babies overcome challenges. They can answer questions and allay fears, giving mothers confidence in their own skills. Established more than 15 years ago, the Catawba County Public Health WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program provides free instruction and support to WIC participants who are considering breastfeeding or who have begun breastfeeding. The program also provides breast pumps for women who qualify.

All WIC breastfeeding peer counselors have been in similar circumstances and have breastfed before, making them peers with WIC clients, and they have undergone special lactation training, making them experts as well. Their support and expertise are all free resources for WIC clients and they offer encouragement to new mothers who have chosen to breastfeed. Support for breastfeeding mothers in the WIC program is available outside of regular business hours. To learn more about breastfeeding and how WIC can support expectant mothers, call 828-695-5800.

WIC is a federal supplemental nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Catawba County Public Health promotes and protects the health of all Catawba County residents through preventive services, innovative partnerships, and community health improvement initiatives. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

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*"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"*