



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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For Immediate Release: August 18, 2010

Families and Communities are Urged to Support Mothers in Breastfeeding Decision

Most women have heard that breastfeeding can help give babies a healthy start to life. Breast milk offers many nutrients that are tailored to meet a baby's needs. It is low in protein which is easier on the developing kidneys of the infant. It also contains antibodies that are not offered or reproduced in infant formula or milk.

According to Angela Smith, president of the International Lactation Consultant Associations (ILCA), mothers need the support of everyone, including family, friends, employers and medical providers as they make their decision to breastfeed or to continue breastfeeding, despite knowing about the nutritional benefits of breast milk.

"One of the biggest factors is that women do not always get the support they need from their community. Employers, health care professionals and all organizations that see new families can provide support to assure them that they are giving their babies the best nutrition and disease-fighting protection for life."

Smith also encouraged that there are simple steps that everyone can take to encourage mothers as they begin to breastfeed.

"Employers can provide lactation rooms so that employees can express milk while they are away from their babies, and help them access lactation consultants who can help them fit breastfeeding into their work schedule. Families can tell new mothers how proud they are that the baby is breastfeeding and offer to help with other household chores."

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program at Catawba County Public Health offers multiple resources to help mothers that make the decision to breast feed. WIC has an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), 2 Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, and several other staff that has taken the NC Lactation Educator Course that assists moms with their breastfeeding needs and help to answer any questions that they may have.

The IBCLC and breastfeeding peer counselors help mothers by teaching them breastfeeding techniques, assessing any problems they may have, and issuing breastfeeding supplies. They also work with moms to set short term goals and help her achieve those goals.

"Breastfeeding provides many health benefits and gives mother and child a chance to bond," explained Julie Byrd, Director for the WIC program at Catawba County Public Health. "It is a journey and we want to do all that we can to provide encouragement to moms who have made the decision to breastfeed."

WIC is a supplemental food program, administered by Catawba County Public Health,

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which provides low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children, ages birth to 5 years old, with nutritious foods, nutrition education, and improved access to health care. The WIC Program helps to identify issues or concerns early, in order to prevent nutrition-related health problems in pregnancy, infancy and early childhood.

For more information about breastfeeding support or the WIC program, please contact the WIC reception area at 695-5884 or visit the Public Health website at catawbacountync.gov/phealth.

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