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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOGNIZES NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FL.— The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County (DOH-St. Lucie) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program are celebrating National Breastfeeding Month, August 2022. This year's theme, ***Together We Do Great Things***, celebrates the power and impact of our collective efforts to support breastfeeding.

The DOH-St. Lucie WIC Program will host a Meet & Greet with the Breastfeeding Peer Counselors in each WIC office lobby held on Wednesdays, August 10, 17 and 24, 2022 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Please stop in to learn more.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) **recommends exclusive breastfeeding for approximately 6 months after birth**. Furthermore, the AAP supports continued breastfeeding, along with appropriate complementary foods introduced at about 6 months, as long as mutually desired by mother and child for 2 years or beyond.

Supporting breastfeeding ensures:

- Good health and prevents malnutrition, including under and over nutrition. Breastfeeding has positive lifelong health effects on infants, children, and mothers such as lower incidence of respiratory infections and ear infections for infants and children and reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer for mothers. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of childhood overweight and obesity compared to formula feeding.
- Food security even in times of crisis. Breastfeeding provides food security to infants from the very beginning of life, contributes to food security for the whole family, and ensures food security for babies even in times of household or widespread disasters, such as hurricanes.
- Improved Economics and Reduced Inequalities. Breastfeeding can help break the cycle of poverty for families, which impacts hunger and malnutrition. Breastfeeding provides an equal start for everyone. With no additional burden on household income, breastfeeding is a low-cost way of feeding babies and contributes to poverty reduction. Breastfeeding can also reduce costs to the health care system and employers by decreasing costs of hospitalizations, medications, and reduced absenteeism.
- A positive impact on the health of the planet in several ways:
 - ✓ Breastmilk is a sustainable and environmentally friendly resource.
 - ✓ Breastfeeding is readily available without needing other supplies.

- ✓ Breastmilk production does not require the use of energy for manufacturing and does not create waste or air pollution.

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program provides breastfeeding support as well as nutrition education, counseling, and nutritious foods for eligible pregnant women, breastfeeding and postpartum women, and infants and children up to five who meet eligibility guidelines.

“As of June 2022, 79% of infants of WIC enrolled mothers initiated breastfeeding. The percentage of WIC enrolled babies continuing to breastfeed up to 26 weeks increased to 38%, and 15.7% were fully breastfed for 26 weeks,” said Clint Sperber, Health Officer and Administrator of the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County.

Peer counselors facilitate the weekly prenatal class focused on breastfeeding offered by telephone or in-person if desired. The Fort Pierce class is held at 1 p.m. and the St. Lucie West class is held at 3 p.m. All mothers-to-be, WIC participants and those not participating on WIC, are encouraged to join us for the classes.

For more information on enrollment and eligibility for the WIC Program at the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County, call our customer service specialists at the St. Lucie West WIC office, Monday, 10 a.m.–7 p.m. and Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. at (772) 785-6124 or call the Fort Pierce WIC office, Monday, 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. and Tuesday–Friday, 8 a.m.– 5 p.m. at (772) 462-3900.

About the Florida Department of Health

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