

BREASTFEEDING

Scientific evidence suggests that breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, followed by breastfeeding into the toddler years, may impact childhood and adult obesity rates. Studies have found lower rates of several chronic diseases throughout childhood and into adulthood among children who were breastfed, including recent findings suggesting that breastfeeding may reduce the risk of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Implementing evidence-based practices that increase breastfeeding rates may have a positive influence in reducing the risk for obesity in childhood and later in life. Breastfeeding should be recognized as the normal and preferred practice for feeding infants up to six months, and part of a healthy diet for a year or longer.

Output Measure 1: By 2010, individuals and families, health care providers and insurers will implement evidence-based practices, and policies that support breastfeeding.

Strategies

- A. Improve and increase community education efforts:
 - Continue “breastfeeding-friendly community” social marketing targeted to individuals, families, childcare providers, employers and businesses
 - Integrate breastfeeding as a curriculum component of health education in schools
 - Publish list of professional and community breastfeeding resources for families and health care providers
- B. Strengthen the breastfeeding education, lactation support and management provided by health care providers to families and individuals:
 - Provide training and continuing education opportunities to health care providers through regional Loving Support trainings, grand rounds and conferences
 - Update content of education curriculum for medical, nursing and other allied health professionals to include lactation, physiology and management
- C. Make lactation support that includes behavioral interventions and lactation management available to all Vermont families:
 - Assure that Medicaid and insurance providers include lactation support in standard, reimbursable perinatal care services
 - Establish sustainable, financially supported, walk-in breastfeeding clinics available to all new mothers in the community, staffed by International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) who are reimbursed for all services provided

Output Measure 2: By 2010, 75 percent of Vermont hospitals will have adopted evidence-based maternity care practices in pursuit of Baby-Friendly Hospital status under the WHO/UNICEF initiative.

Strategies

- A. Establish partnerships between local breastfeeding coalitions and networks and key decision makers at maternity care facilities to implement evidence-based practices that support breastfeeding.
- B. Support hospital staff participation in 18-hour training courses in breastfeeding.
- C. Establish links between maternity facilities and community breastfeeding support systems.

Output Measure 3: By 2010, 75 percent of Vermont employers will provide lactation management benefits and services that support breastfeeding families.

Strategies

- A. Establish a model lactation support program for all state employees.
- B. Work with legislators to increase the protection, promotion and support for breastfeeding mothers in the workforce.
- C. Continue work site recognition programs to honor employers who support employees who breastfeed.

Output Measure 4: By 2010, increase the number of peer counseling programs by five.

Strategies

- A. Fund one full-time position at the state level to coordinate peer counseling services for all women (not just those eligible for WIC).
- B. Replicate and expand the WIC Peer Counseling program to include coverage of all women in selected districts across the state.

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital Recognized for Being Baby Friendly

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital joined 18 other US hospitals when it received the Baby-Friendly Hospital Award in 2000. NVRH, while adopting the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, proved their dedication to improve breastfeeding policies, training and practices. Their commitment to implementing the evidence-based practices has created an environment supportive of breastfeeding. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative is a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund to encourage and recognize hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for lactation.

NVRH supports mothers in making health-based decisions on the best infant-feeding options, free of commercial interests, and they provide skilled support for this choice. Data from around the world clearly indicates the positive impact of the Baby Friendly Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding on breastfeeding initiation, duration, exclusivity and related child-health outcomes. NVRH through their clinicians, hospital administrators and policymakers, continues to contribute to this endeavor so that mothers and babies enjoy the best start possible. The receipt of this international award is an achievement to celebrate!