

# How Breastfeeding impacts the health of women and infants from a Public Health perspective

BF summit  
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# Purpose

- 1) Provide an overview of the positive impact Breastfeeding (BF) can provide for women and infants
- 2) Review other public health factors that BF positively impacts



They/parents need complete information about:

- The health benefits of breastfeeding for their infants and themselves
- The impact that not providing breastmilk can have for their infants & themselves
- Support for the decisions they make about their own infant's feeding

# Term infants

- Infants breastfed at the breast for at least 4 mos
  - Have a decreased risk of respiratory and ear infection
  - Decreased risk of GI illnesses
  - Helps infants learn to self regulate based on hunger and satiety
  - Are less likely to be overweight/obese
  - Decreased risk of asthma

# Preterm Infants

- Preterm infants fed an exclusive human milk diet demonstrate improved morbidity compared to formula fed infants
- Mothers' own milk is Medicine in the NICU
- Prioritize practices and interventions to optimize use of MOM
  - Help mothers begin pumping early and regularly during their infant's NICU hospitalization

- Use human milk and human milk technologies
- Utilize peer counselors
- Translate evidence regarding human milk therapies into actionable practices for providers
- Develop and provide clear messages that support human milk as both as a source of nutrition and medicine

Lindsey Schehr, PhD, FNP, IBCLC

# Women who breastfeed

- Uterus returns to prepregnant size more quickly
- Decreases postpartum bleeding
- Lose weight more quickly after childbirth
- Have a decreased risk of premenopausal breast cancer proportionate to the number of months they breastfeed their infants
- Helps with interconception spacing

- Helps control diabetes
- Decreases risk of cardiovascular risk in middle adulthood

# Education and support for parents

They/parents need complete information about:

- The health benefits of breastfeeding for their infants and themselves
- The impact that not providing breastmilk can have for their infants & themselves
- Support for the decisions they make about their own infant's feeding

# Infant feeding: Breastfeeding-what does the research tell us?

- Health care professionals are less likely to:
  - encourage African American women to BF
  - provide African American women with information to make informed choice about infant feeding
- African American women are more likely to BF if they have close family members who BF their infants
- WIC has taken a much more active role in supporting breastfeeding
- Baby Friendly hospitals and work environments increase initiation and duration rates of breastfeeding
- Return to work or school is a barrier for initiation and duration of BF
- Formula company marketing discourages BF

*The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.*

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