



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama celebrates Breastfeeding Awareness

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children are celebrating August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This year's theme is "Exclusive Breastfeeding: the Gold Standard, Safe, Sound, Sustainable."

The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System survey, known as PRAMS, found that 57.5 percent of Alabama mothers breastfed their newborn babies while in the hospital in 2002. One mother commented on the PRAMS survey, "I encourage every mother to at least try to breastfeed their new baby. It creates a strong bond between mother and baby."

The Healthy People 2010 objective is to have at least 75 percent of all Alabama mothers breastfeeding at hospital discharge, 50 percent continuing to breastfeed until the infant is 6 months old and 25 percent breastfeeding for at least one year.

Breastfeeding has been recognized as the optimal method of feeding an infant. Research studies show that mothers who breastfeed have a reduced risk of developing osteoporosis and breast, uterine and ovarian cancers. Human milk provides immunological protection against a variety of illnesses and it changes to meet the growing infant's nutritional needs. Mothers who breastfeed miss fewer work or school days because their babies are sick less often. Babies who are not breastfed are more likely to have ear infections, respiratory illnesses, diabetes and childhood obesity.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health and the Advertising Council have launched a national campaign, "Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed," that encourages first-time mothers to exclusively breastfeed for six months.

WIC and hospitals are working to promote breastfeeding as the optimal source of nutrition for all Alabama babies. "Breastfeeding is one of the most important ways to protect the health of Alabama's infants and children. We must all work together to increase the incidence and duration rates of breastfeeding in Alabama," says Michell Grainger, MSN, RNC, IBCLC, state lactation coordinator with the Division of WIC.

For more information about breastfeeding or other maternal and child health issues in Alabama, please call the Healthy Beginnings Hotline at 1-800-654-1385.

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