



News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

Date: August 1, 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROMOTES BREASTFEEDING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF AUGUST

Moms Who Breastfeed Are Celebrated During National Breastfeeding Month

(White Plains, NY) – During World Breastfeeding Week, August 1 through 7, and National Breastfeeding Month, in August, the Westchester County Department of Health applauds breastfeeding mothers for their public health contribution and recognizes the importance of community, family and employer support.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “I encourage all new mothers to try breastfeeding because breast milk is best for baby and support is available for working mothers who breastfeed. Breast milk provides antibodies that can protect infants from diseases before they are fully vaccinated. It can reduce their risk of Sudden Infant Death and their risk of obesity later in life, and it also benefits mothers.”

This year’s World Breastfeeding theme is “Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support For All.” Employers are required by law to provide private, hygienic and convenient places for nursing employees to pump breast milk and to provide a written policy to employees about their right to express breast milk at work. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends infants breastfeed exclusively until they are six months old and encourages

parents who continue to breastfeed after solid foods are introduced at six months to continue for up to two years or more, as long as it is mutually desired by mother and child.

Through its Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Health Department supports mothers who breastfeed by providing them with breast pumps, additional nourishing food and the help of certified lactation counselors and peer counselors. The number of mothers who initiate breastfeeding has increased from last year, with 89 percent of postpartum WIC participants giving breastfeeding a try from March through June 2024, up from 86 percent a year ago. Currently, almost 200 WIC moms are exclusively breastfeeding and more than 500 are partially breastfeeding.

To promote the important benefits of breastfeeding and to honor its exclusively breastfeeding WIC moms, the Westchester County Health Department WIC program is collecting photos of WIC moms breastfeeding along with statements about what breastfeeding means to them. These photos will be shared in the County's WIC clinics to recognize breastfeeding families and encourage continued breastfeeding. The WIC Program has three Peer Counselors on staff to support the individual breastfeeding needs of participants and the agency hosts classes twice a month in English and Spanish to share information on breastfeeding.

Westchester WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator Celine De Tosellet-Perez said: "WIC promotes breastfeeding as the best way to feed infants. We offer peer counseling and lactation support during the prenatal period, and this helps our breastfeeding mothers continue in the early postpartum period and beyond."

Amler also recognized the support local hospitals give new mothers as they begin breastfeeding and encouraged community support for mothers who continue to breastfeed as their babies grow.

Benefits to babies who receive their mother's milk:

- fewer ear infections, respiratory infections and digestive infection;
- lower risk of developing diabetes or cancer;
- reduced risk of developing asthma and allergies;
- less likely to be obese later in life; and
- less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Benefits to women who breastfeed their infants:

- recover faster after birth and tend to lose pregnancy weight faster;
- less likely to develop diabetes;
- reduced risk for breast and ovarian cancer;
- less stress and reduced risk of postpartum depression;
- enhance their bond with their baby through skin-to-skin touching and eye contact that is shared during breastfeeding;
- save time: breast milk is always ready;
- and save money by not buying formula.

More information on breastfeeding is available at www.westchestergov.com/health.

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