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Media contact: Public Health Division communications: 971-246-9139, or
PHD.Communications@state.or.us

Oregon Public Health gets creative to improve health through breastfeeding support

25 Oregon counties gear up for breastfeeding promotion projects

Oregon Public Health is exploring creative ways to make Oregon one of the healthiest states, including reducing heart disease and obesity by promoting breastfeeding.

Oregon's Nutrition and Health Screening Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) promotes breastfeeding as a way to achieve optimal health for babies by reducing the risk of many health problems such as obesity, diabetes and asthma. Mothers who choose formula over breastfeeding have a greater risk of high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure, which can contribute to heart disease and stroke. Breastfeeding can also help mothers lose their pregnancy weight gain more quickly.

"Increasing breastfeeding rates by reducing the many barriers could save more than \$13 billion a year in health care costs nationwide," said Sue Woodbury, Oregon Public Health WIC program manager.

Most Oregon moms start out breastfeeding their babies – 90 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But only 21 percent of Oregon mothers breastfeed exclusively for the recommended six months.

(more)

“Grant funds are giving WIC agencies across Oregon the opportunity to implement unique ways to eliminate barriers to breastfeeding,” said Woodbury. “Their efforts range from improving breastfeeding support in worksite and childcare settings, to creating support groups with lactation specialists. Each community has different needs.”

In 2011, Oregon WIC won a WIC Breastfeeding Performance Bonus award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for having one of the highest breastfeeding rates in the nation. That award funds local breastfeeding support projects.

For nearly 40 years, WIC has provided Oregon mothers and children with nutrition education, breastfeeding support, health assessments, and improved access to health care and nutritious foods. The program serves about 112,000 people in Oregon every month.

"For more information about breastfeeding support projects across Oregon, [read the complete descriptions \(pdf\)](#) or [view the map \(pdf\)](#)."

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