

BREASTFEEDING

ISSUE: Breastfeeding is the optimal source of nutrition for the infant's first year of life. The nutritional, immunological, and psychosocial benefits are well documented. Breastfeeding provides significant economic and ecologic savings for families, businesses and society.

BACKGROUND: A well-developed culturally sensitive education and promotion program on breastfeeding should be part of a community-wide health program. Successful community-wide education programs include education to public agencies and businesses and media. For breastfeeding to be considered a societal norm, communities must foster the belief that breastfeeding is a normal part of everyday life. Development of multidisciplinary breastfeeding task forces may aid in making necessary societal changes in the community. Communities need to become aware of the cost benefit of breastfeeding and how to provide support for breastfeeding in the workplace, schools, colleges, day care centers, and public places. Health curricula, kindergarten through twelve, should include the benefits of breastfeeding as well as the anatomical and physiological dynamics of the process. In addition, lactation and breastfeeding supportive techniques should be included in university curricula for medical, nursing, and allied health professional programs. Obstacles to breastfeeding within the health care system, workplace and community need to be identified and eliminated.

STRATEGY: *Establish perinatal programs that provide direct support and education beginning prenatally and continuing through hospitalization.*

Following discharge, a program for home health services, office visits and referrals to breastfeeding support groups should be part of every care plan for the family.

November 1995
Reviewed August 6, 2003