

Colorado Can Do 5! Offers Hospitals Specific Strategies to Extend Breastfeeding Duration

"**WE CAN DO THAT!**" was the enthusiastic response Marianne Neifert, MD, FAAP, typically received when she began encouraging Colorado hospitals to implement five key supportive maternity practices that have a significant positive effect on duration of breastfeeding. From 2008-2010, Dr. Neifert, a leading expert on the promotion and management of breastfeeding, traveled across Colorado promoting breastfeeding-friendly maternity practices to hospitals and medical centers. The statewide hospital initiative--funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)--quickly was dubbed, the *Colorado Can Do 5!*



BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING: The well-recognized, diverse health benefits of breastfeeding for both infants and mothers make successful breastfeeding an essential part of health promotion. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, breastfeeding offers infants significant protection against otitis media, gastroenteritis, severe lower respiratory infections, and necrotizing enterocolitis. Infants who are breastfed also have a reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome, type 2 diabetes, leukemia, and childhood overweight. The maternal health benefits of breastfeeding include a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes and midlife metabolic syndrome, as well as breast and ovarian cancers.

BREASTFEEDING IN COLORADO: Nearly **90 percent of Colorado mothers begin breastfeeding their newborns after birth**, an admirable rate that exceeds the national average and the CDC's national health objective for breastfeeding initiation. However, many mothers who begin breastfeeding stop nursing in the early postpartum weeks and months, resulting in Colorado's breastfeeding rates at six and twelve months falling short of national health objectives. Strategies to prolong breastfeeding duration—such as the *Colorado Can Do 5!*—translate to increased health benefits for both babies and mothers, and decreased health care costs.

STEPS TO SUCCESS: Making institutional changes in maternity care practices has been shown to significantly increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) was launched in 1991 by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to encourage and give special recognition to hospitals that demonstrate an optimal level of breastfeeding care by adhering to ten model breastfeeding practices, known as The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. While these Ten Steps are considered the gold standard for breastfeeding maternity practices, relatively few U.S. hospitals—and only two in Colorado—have earned the “Baby-Friendly” designation which is often viewed as a daunting effort. In a Colorado population-based study conducted by CDPHE and published in the September 2007 issue of *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care*, five of the Baby-Friendly Ten Steps were found to significantly extend breastfeeding duration among Colorado mothers of healthy newborns.

The five hospital practices found to **significantly impact breastfeeding continuation** are:

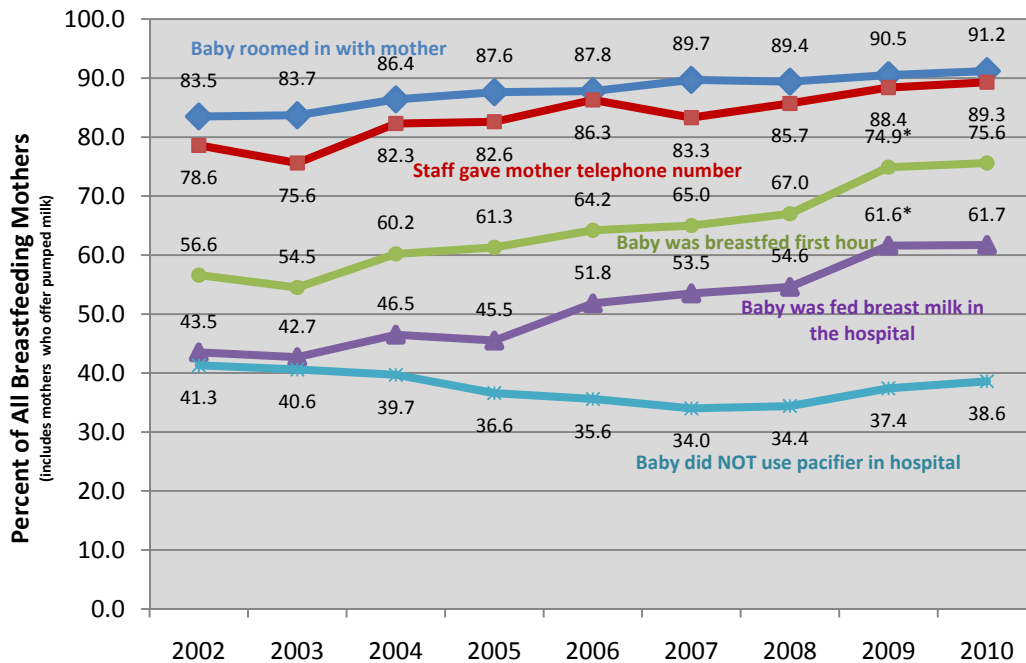
- 1) Infant is breastfed in the first hour after birth.
- 2) Infant is fed only breast milk in the hospital.
- 3) Infant stays in the same room with the mother in the hospital.
- 4) Infant does not use a pacifier in the hospital.
- 5) Hospital staff gives mother a telephone number to call for help with breastfeeding after discharge.

While each of the five practices independently impacts breastfeeding duration, women who experience all five supportive hospital practices have the longest duration of breastfeeding. Two-thirds of mothers receiving all five practices were still breastfeeding at four months. **In 2010, one in four Colorado mothers of healthy breastfed infants reported experiencing all five successful hospital breastfeeding practices.** This number is up from one in five mothers in 2003.

CDPHE is committed to supporting hospitals with the implementation of these five supportive breastfeeding practices as a strategy to increase breastfeeding duration rates and promote incremental steps toward the Baby-Friendly ideal.

Hospitals are striving toward improving mothers' hospital experiences. The graph below depicts the change Colorado mothers report when experiencing the five practices.

Colorado Can Do 5! Hospital Breastfeeding Practices, 2002-2010



*Statistically significant change between 2008 and 2009

Data source: Colorado Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) annual surveys. Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment. Chart created by Epidemiology, Planning, and Evaluation Branch, Prevention Services Division, 11-30-2011

Parents are informed of the breastfeeding practices through Local Public Health agency programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, and from hospital distribution of a crib card available in English and Spanish (see image at right). Mothers can present the card to the maternity center where they deliver.

NEXT STEPS: Tracking of mothers' hospital experiences will continue for several more years as CDPHE continues to study the impact of hospital practices on breastfeeding.



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