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## FLORIDA HEALTH PROMOTES BREASTFEEDING DURING WORLD BREASTFEEDING MONTH



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**DeFuniak Springs, Fla.**—The Florida Department of Health in Walton County is highlighting the importance of breastfeeding during National Breastfeeding Month. Breastfeeding plays a critical role in healthy development from the very beginning of a child's life.

"Breast feeding gives your baby the best start in life possible with health benefits that last a lifetime" said Holly Holt, DOH Walton Administrator/Health Officer. "Breast milk is the perfect nutrition with the right amount of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients to help babies grow well".

Earlier this year, the department launched the Florida Healthy Babies initiative and has invested nearly two million dollars in helping hospitals around the state promote "Baby Steps to Baby Friendly" in order to support mothers in practicing exclusive breastfeeding for their infants. Breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, mothers need supportive maternity leave policies, flexible work hours, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply.

The WIC Program encourages mothers to breastfeed their infant by sharing information through peer counseling and educational materials, providing both manual and electrical breast pumps and also enhanced food package for families who receive no artificial baby milk or less than the full amount.

For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556 or visit [www.FloridaWIC.org](http://www.FloridaWIC.org). To learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding visit [www.Illi.org](http://www.Illi.org); or [www.flbreastfeeding.org](http://www.flbreastfeeding.org).

For more information about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly visit the Florida Healthiest Weight [website](#).

For resources on breastfeeding and print outs for working moms, visit our activity page [here](#).

**About Healthiest Weight Florida**

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. To learn more about how to be active and make nutritious food choices visit [www.healthiestweightflorida.com](http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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