



Mark A. McDonnell, RS, MS, Health Commissioner  
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# News Release

For Immediate Release  
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## August Marks the Beginning of Breastfeeding Awareness Month

(XENIA, OH) August 1-7, 2009, is World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) and marks the beginning of Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Ohio. This year's WBW theme is *Breastfeeding – a vital emergency response. Are you ready?* This theme offers the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) maternal and child health programs the opportunity to partner with disaster preparedness agencies and institutions as well as other community programs to encourage breastfeeding as a way to ensure continued infant health during an emergency.

“Besides the myriad of health benefits, breastfeeding provides protection against malnutrition and disease during natural disasters, emergencies and economic downturns,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M. D. “Breastmilk is a free, sterile, reliable food source for infants and young children. There have been many reported instances of children being kept alive during disasters by nursing. During an emergency, the breastfeeding mother has the comfort of knowing that her baby has a safe and adequate food supply available as long as necessary.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that Ohio's breastfeeding initiation rate of 59.6 percent ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation. To be better prepared for any situation or emergency, communities should actively promote and support breastfeeding by:

- Encouraging all pregnant women and their families to consider how they would feed their baby if clean water, sterile bottles and formula or even shelter were not available.
- Asking all delivery hospitals to institute the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* so that mothers who choose to breastfeed will have a better chance at being successful.
- Encouraging all employers to offer their breastfeeding employees time and a clean place to pump.
- Partnering with disaster preparedness groups and local lactation support professionals to develop infant feeding protocols that protect breastfeeding.

“All elements of the community should cooperate and support breastfeeding mothers so babies can be assured of a free, safe and reliable food source whenever disaster strikes,” said Mark A. McDonnell, Greene County Health Commissioner. “Ultimately, our whole society benefits from having healthier mothers, babies and children when breastfeeding is supported.”

The Greene County Combined Health District (GCCHD) WIC Program will hold a Breastfeeding Awareness Month walk at The Fairfield Commons Mall on Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM. There is no cost to participate in the walk, but pre-registration is requested at (937) 374-5642.

(continued)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about breastfeeding in Greene County, please call the Help Me Grow Helpline at 1-800-755-GROW or Nancy Cohen, MS, RD, LD, IBCLC, WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator, at 374-5642 or toll-free at 1-866-858-3588.

**Greene County Combined Health District – Your center for public health services and health information in Greene County for over 80 years.**

**Healthy People...Healthy Communities**

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