Ohio | Department of Health

Maternal and Child Health
Women and Infants Health | 2013

Breastfeeding

Health Impact

Breastfeeding is the preferred method of providing infant nutrition and promoting infant health. Infants who are not breastfed have increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC), ear infections, and GI infections. They may have higher risk for developing obesity[1].

Mothers who do not breastfeed are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, breast and ovarian cancers, and may take longer to return to their pre-pregnancy weight[2].

Breastfeeding benefits for mother and infant are greatest when exclusive breastfeeding (only breastmilk) is sustained for the recommended 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, with continuation of breastfeeding for one year or longer[2].

Cost Impact

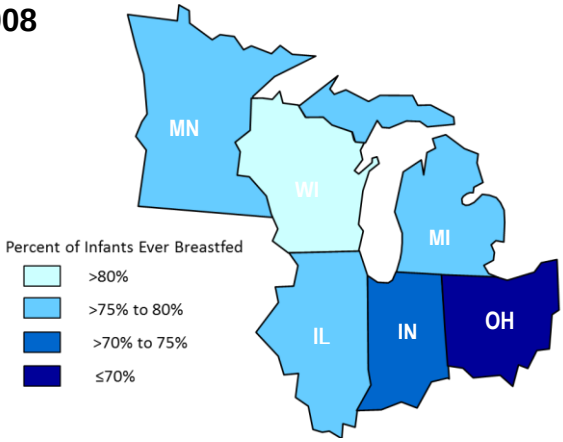
Suboptimal breastfeeding in the U.S. leads to unnecessary infant deaths and medical costs associated with preventable diseases. If 90% of infants were breastfed exclusively for the recommended six months, the US would save $13 billion per year and prevent an excess 911 deaths[3].

Breastfeeding and Work

Promoting breastfeeding among employees is beneficial for companies. Workplace breastfeeding programs improve retention of experienced employees. Breastfed infants are sick less often than formula-fed infants, so their parents take less time off, and health care costs are reduced[4].

Lactating employees are protected under the law. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, employers must provide "reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child's birth," and provide a place other than a bathroom for employees to express breast milk[5].

Figure 1: Breastfeeding Initiation in HRSA Region 5 States, 2008

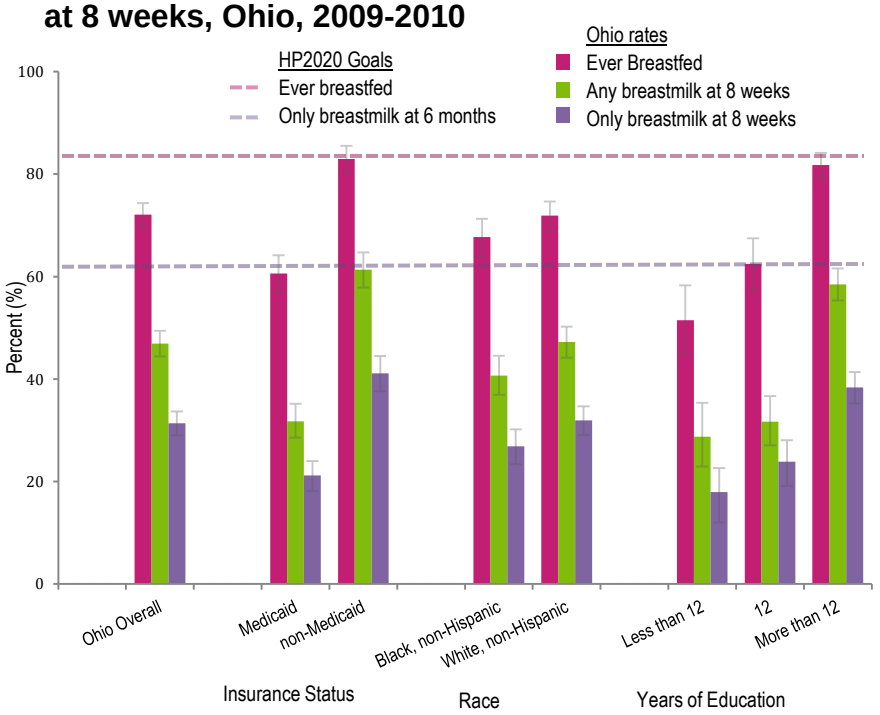


Source: National Immunization Survey

How is Ohio Doing?

- Breastfeeding rates have increased over the past five years, with 75% of Ohio women reporting ever breastfeeding in 2010 (Ohio PRAMS)
- Breastfeeding rates remain below Healthy People 2020 goals of 81% initiating breastfeeding and 60% exclusively breastfeeding for six months
- Ohio has the lowest rate of breastfeeding initiation in comparison with other states in its region (Fig. 1)
- Women who are less educated, Black, or receiving Medicaid services have lower rates of breastfeeding in Ohio (Fig. 2)
- Even when women initiate breastfeeding, few continue exclusively breastfeeding for longer than eight weeks (Fig. 2)

Figure 2: Breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity at 8 weeks, Ohio, 2009-2010



Source: Ohio Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2009-2010

Sustaining Breastfeeding

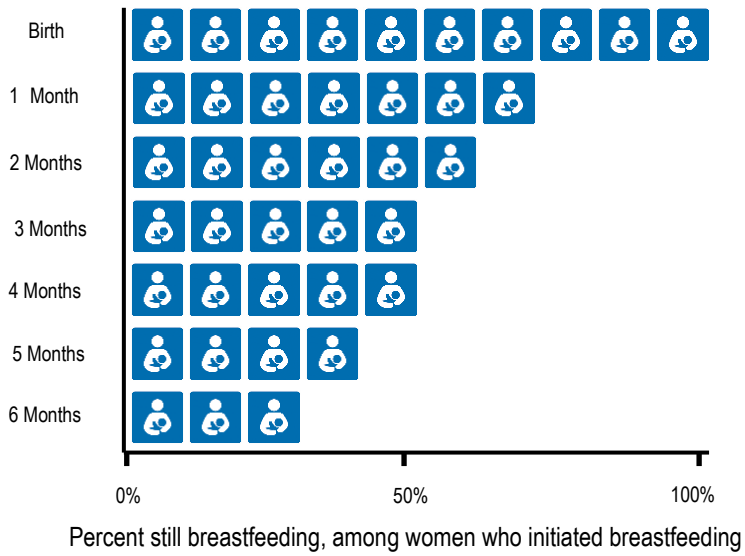
Without support at home, work or school, in the community, and from medical providers, achieving breastfeeding recommendations is difficult. Even among women who initiate breastfeeding in Ohio, nearly 30% stop before their infant is 1 month old. Only about one-third of infants who were ever breastfed still receive breastmilk when they are 6 months old. (Fig. 3)

Reasons cited by Ohio women for stopping breastfeeding include:

- they do not have enough milk;
- their milk does not satisfy their baby;
- difficulty latching;
- returning to work or school; and
- breastfeeding is too hard, difficult, or painful.

Only 10% of women who had stopped breastfeeding between about three and six months said that one of the reasons was that they felt it was the right time to stop (Ohio PRAMS, 2009-10).

Figure 3: Percent of breastfeeding mothers still breastfeeding by month after birth, Ohio, 2009-2010



Source: Ohio Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2009-2010

Ohio

What is Being Done to Promote, Support, and Protect Breastfeeding in Ohio?

Current Programs and Activities

- Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Policy on Infant Feeding establishes a consistent infant feeding message across department programs and activities.
- Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Award recognizes employers for promoting and supporting breastfeeding.
- Six Ohio hospitals are certified "Baby Friendly" because of policies and practices that support breastfeeding.
- Five Ohio hospitals are participants in a national learning collaborative, Best Fed Beginnings, to become Baby Friendly.
- Mother's Milk Bank of Ohio provides safe donor breastmilk.
- The ODH Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps program provides donor breastmilk to eligible children.
- Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative's Human Milk Subgroup aims to increase the number of 22 to 29 week preterm infants receiving human milk in the first 72 hours of life.
- Ohio WIC promotes and supports breastfeeding through peer counselors, breast pump provision, and other strategies.

Action Steps in Your Community

- Integrate education and support for breastfeeding into public health programs that support new families.
- Help make your workplace supportive for breastfeeding employees and clients.
- Encourage employers to develop breastfeeding support programs and apply for the Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Award.
- Ensure that child care providers accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers and infants.
- Work on establishing links between maternity care hospitals and community breastfeeding support networks; for example, WIC's "Building Bridges for Breastfeeding Duration" program.
- Develop and disseminate a list of local breastfeeding support resources.
- Ensure that client outreach materials comply with the ODH Infant Feeding Policy.
- Help hospitals to implement the "10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding."

References:

1. Ip et al. Breastfeeding and Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes in Developed Countries. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2007.
2. AAP Section on Breastfeeding. Breastfeeding and the use of Human Milk. Pediatrics, 2012.
3. Bartick M, Reinhold A. The burden of suboptimal breastfeeding in the United States. Pediatrics, 2010.
4. www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/business-case-for-breastfeeding-for-business-managers.pdf Accessed 5/7/2013.
5. http://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers/ Accessed 4/1/2013.

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Resources:

ODH Infant Feeding Policy: http://1.usa.gov/15t6IDL
ODH Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Award: http://bit.ly/10SEcJk
Ohio Mother's Milk Bank: http://bit.ly/17lodh6
Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative Project: http://bit.ly/12bYCK4
Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding: http://1.usa.gov/13ZiRvT
CDC Guide to Breastfeeding Interventions: http://1.usa.gov/15ldhbU
Business Case for Breastfeeding: http://1.usa.gov/16cw0WL
Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative: http://bit.ly/ZLNrcN

Data Notes: Figure 2 *Mothers on Medicaid include those who reported Medicaid for health care coverage during any of the following three time periods: the month before pregnancy, for prenatal care visits, or for delivery. Bars represent 95% Confidence Intervals.* **Figure 3** *Estimates obtained with survival analysis using the Kaplan-Meier method.*

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PRAMS Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System