Breastfeeding is an effective approach to reducing lifelong risk for chronic disease. It helps protect babies against asthma, type 2 diabetes and obesity. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and protects babies from ear infections and pneumonia.

Improving breastfeeding duration rates in Maine can support future health.

- In Maine, 87 percent of infants born in 2013 were ever breastfed, up from 75 percent in 2004 (Figure 1)

- Exclusively breastfed until 3 months: 1 in 2 infants

- Exclusively breastfed for 6 months: 1 in 3 infants

Exclusive breastfeeding rates in Maine are better than U.S. rates, but there is still room for improvement.

- In 2013, 87 percent of Maine infants were ever breastfed (similar to the U.S., 81 percent)

- More Maine infants were exclusively breastfed at 3 months (54 percent) and 6 months (32 percent) than compared to the U.S. (44 percent at 3 months, 22 percent at 6 months)

Research studies show that breastfeeding:

- Protects children against obesity and future type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- Reduces the risk of maternal type 2 diabetes

Breastfeeding, Obesity & Diabetes

Figure 1. Breastfeeding Trends
Maine, 2004-2013 (%)
Breastfeeding Disparities in Maine

- Mothers with an annual household income less than $50,000 are significantly less likely to ever breastfeed than those with an annual household income greater than $50,000 (Figure 2)

- Mothers with more than a high school education are significantly more likely to breastfeed than those with a high school or less than a high school education (Figure 2)

- Mothers who are married are significantly more likely to breastfeed than those who are not married (90 vs 75 percent)

- Mothers who have MaineCare are significantly less likely to ever breastfeed (73 percent) than mothers who do not have MaineCare (96 percent)

- Mothers who are enrolled in WIC are significantly less likely to ever breastfeed (71 percent) than mothers who are not enrolled in WIC (92 percent)

Breastfeeding Recommendations

The Academy of American Pediatrics recommends:

- babies be exclusively breastfed for their first 6 months,
- babies continue to breastfeed for a year, as long as mutually desired by the mother and baby,
- and breastfeeding be physician supported for as long as it is the right choice for mother and baby.

What Can You Do?

Providers can:

- Encourage pregnant women to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months
- Refer nursing mothers to a lactation consultant

All those who care for moms and babies can:

- Support skin to skin contact
- Promote rooming in
- Provide breastfeeding education

Sources:

MAINE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, (207) 287-2273
www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdcpopulation-health/hmp/panp/breastfeeding.html

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