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EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles

www.eatrightmontana.org

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MT Department of Public Health & Human Services

August 2009

Breastfeeding: Best for Baby, Best for Mom, Best for the Planet

It's no secret that breastfeeding is *best for baby, best for mom*. After all, that's the slogan used by the US Department of Health and Human Services at their National Women's Health Information Center (www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/). Breastfeeding is also clearly better for the earth, since it eliminates all the environmental costs associated with formula production and plastic bottle usage.

"No matter how you look at it, breastfeeding is simply the best infant feeding choice," says Melissa Tyvand, RD (Registered Dietitian) at the Community Hospital of Anaconda (MT). "It's also the least expensive. Depending on the brand of formula, breastfeeding can save a Montana family \$1000 to \$4000 per year. Based on all the health, environmental, and economic benefits, Community Hospital of Anaconda made a commitment to meet the criteria of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI at www.babyfriendlyusa.org/), which promotes, protects, and supports breastfeeding."

Anaconda's Community Hospital is the first accredited breastfeeding friendly hospital in Montana, meeting the strict standards of the international BFHI. The hospital recently received its second five-year accreditation based on a comprehensive program of education and policies, which includes:

- **Education for all hospital staff and board of directors on the benefits of breastfeeding**
- **Intensive skills training for obstetric and pediatric staff on breastfeeding success**
- **Substitution of gift bags for new mothers (breastfeeding support items instead of free formula)**

"Since our hospital is only one part of breastfeeding support, community partners are a major part of our success," notes Tyvand. "In Anaconda, and across the state, local offices of the Montana WIC Program provides tremendous support for women before delivery and after they leave the hospital."

Montana is also fortunate to have coalitions which offer information to individuals, workplaces, and health care providers who want to be breastfeeding friendly. The Montana State Breastfeeding Coalition (www.mtbreastfeedingcoalition.org/) offers links to local groups, details of Montana laws affecting breastfeeding, and resources for families, such as these tips for breastfeeding success:

- **Tell everyone about your plans to breastfeed:** Let your doctor, pediatrician, hospital nurses, family, friends, and employer know that you plan to give only breast milk - and will need their full support.
- **Room-in and feed frequently:** Having your baby in your hospital room allows you to respond to his/her hunger cues immediately. Frequent breastfeeding is the best way to build a good milk supply.
- **Know who to ask for support:** Most breastfeeding problems have easy solutions. Before your baby is born, make a list of who you can call for help (nurse, lactation specialist, experienced mom, etc.).

According to Tyvand, breastfeeding is the completely natural way to feed babies. "New moms and their families still need information, instruction, and plenty of TLC to make breastfeeding a success."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at

www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm

Going Green: Simple Steps for Healthy Families 2009