



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Mom's Milk is Best

Progress in Increasing Breastfeeding and Reducing Racial/Ethnic Differences – United States, 2000-2008 Births

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Breastfeeding is the best way to ensure that growing babies are getting essential nutrients. Jessica Allen is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and she's joining us today to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding.

Welcome to the show, Jessica.

[Ms. Allen] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jessica, why should a mom breastfeed her baby?

[Ms. Allen] This is the best thing for the baby and the mom. The baby receives immediate and long-term benefits. Through breast milk, they receive antibodies that protect them from ear infections, gastrointestinal diseases, and other infections. They also have long-term benefits that include protection from diabetes and obesity. For moms, they are protected against breast and ovarian cancer.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are more moms in the US breastfeeding now compared to 10 years ago?

[Ms. Allen] Yes. We are seeing that, overall, the percent of moms who start breastfeeding is increasing. It increased from 70 to 75 percent. We did look at a few racial-ethnic groups and found some differences. African American moms are breastfeeding less than white and Hispanic moms, but the gap is narrowing.

[Dr. Gaynes] How long should a mother breastfeed her baby?

[Ms. Allen] A mother should breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of life. After six months, as foods are introduced, she should continue to breastfeed until the child is 12 months old.

[Dr. Gaynes] What do new moms need to successfully breastfeed?

[Ms. Allen] Well, breastfeeding is not always easy and women need a lot of support. They will meet a lot of different people before, during, and after birth who may affect their decision to breastfeed, whether it's a family member, doctors, nurses, an employer – these people all have a role to play in supporting a breastfeeding mom.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about breastfeeding?

[Ms. Allen] They can go to the website womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Jessica. I've been talking today with CDC's Jessica Allen about the benefits of breastfeeding.

Remember moms, successful breastfeeding is the best thing you can do, for you and your baby. It requires patience and commitment. Moms need support from their hospital, doctor, employer, family, and community. If you need help, don't hesitate to ask a health care provider or a breastfeeding specialist.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.