



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Benefits of Breastfeeding*

*Improvements in Maternity Care Policies and Practices that Support Breastfeeding — United States, 2007-2013*

Recorded: September 29, 2015; posted: October 8, 2015

*[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 has well-documented benefits for both newborns and their mothers, and getting off to a good start is important for success.

Dr. Cria Perrine is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and she's joining us today to discuss the importance of breastfeeding babies during their first year of life. Welcome to the show, Cria.

[Dr. Perrine] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cria, are most babies breastfed in the U.S.?

[Dr. Perrine] Yes. About 80 percent of babies start out breastfeeding, and this has actually been about a 10 percent increase over the last decade. However, most babies are not breastfed as long as recommended.

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

[Dr. Perrine] Babies should be breastfed exclusively for about the first 6 months, which means breast milk only. And then, after the introduction of solid foods, should continue breastfeeding throughout the first year.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the health benefits of breastfeeding?

[Dr. Perrine] For the baby, there are a number of health benefits. This includes a reduced risk of a number of infections, a reduced risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, asthma, diabetes, and obesity. There are also a number of health benefits for the mom, including a reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer and diabetes.

[Dr. Gaynes] What accounts for the increase in breastfeeding in the U.S.?

[Dr. Perrine] It's likely a number of things, one of which is probably improvement in hospital practices to support breastfeeding. So we know that the hospital experience is critical for helping moms establish breastfeeding. Things like helping moms breastfeed within the first hour of birth, keeping moms and babies together throughout the hospital stay, and giving only breast milk to breast fed babies. There has been an improvement over the last five to 10 years in these things that hospitals do to support breastfeeding, however, there is still a lot of room for improvement.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some strategies for successful breastfeeding?

[Dr. Perrine] Pregnant women can talk to their health care providers about breastfeeding, and as they're choosing a birth hospital, find out what policies and practices their hospital has that supports breastfeeding. They can also ask their health care provider or their hospital for resources they have, such as access to lactation specialists in case they need help after their baby's born.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cria, where can listeners get more information about breastfeeding?

[Dr. Perrine] More information's available at [cdc.gov/breastfeeding](http://cdc.gov/breastfeeding), all one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Cria. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Cria Perrine about the importance of breastfeeding infants during their first year of life. Remember, breastfeeding has well-documented benefits for both newborns and their mothers. New mothers should work closely with their health care providers and lactation specialists to ensure their newborns enjoy the full benefits of breastfeeding.

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](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.