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## August Is Breastfeeding Awareness Month



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**Vero Beach, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Indian River County is celebrating Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This is a perfect time to remind the community that breastfeeding is one of the most natural and beneficial acts a mother can do for her child. According to the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics, 84% of mothers initiate breastfeeding in Indian River County, and there are a wide range of support services for breastfeeding mothers offered in the county.

“Breastfeeding Awareness Month increases awareness of the opportunities and benefits from breastfeeding to both mother and babies. Research shows that breastfeeding helps prevent infection, illnesses, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in babies, and they are less likely to become obese later in life”, said Miranda Hawker, Florida Department of Health in Indian River County Administrator.

“The amazing benefits a mother gives her baby while breastfeeding are well documented. However, something that is often overlooked are the benefits that the mother receives by breastfeeding.” said Andrea Berry, MNM, Interim Executive Director of Indian River County Healthy Start Coalition. “Breastfeeding burns calories (about 300-500 per day), decreases the likelihood of breast cancer, is free, sometimes delays the return of your menstrual cycle after birth, and studies suggest that breastfeeding protects mothers from postpartum depression.” Berry said.

Indian River County’s network of support and resources include the Florida Department of Health in Indian River County, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program, Indian River Medical Center, and many of our local pediatricians. Additionally, La Leche League, an organization that supports and encourages breastfeeding, has a robust and large peer to peer support group in our area.

The Indian River County Healthy Start Coalition hosts five programs with Indian River Medical Center that, among many other things, help families meet their breastfeeding goals. “Two of these programs are designed to foster breastfeeding”, continues Berry. TLC (Touch Love Communicate) Newborn program staff visit each new mother while still in the hospital to support and teach about the benefits of breastfeeding. The Belly Beautiful Program educates and empowers pregnant Indian River County families with weekly classes, helping them to feel more prepared and confident leading to healthier lifestyle choices such as breastfeeding. Both programs are ready to assist moms to overcome obstacles and even help develop a breastfeeding plan of action.

Linda Roberts, Belly Beautiful and TLC Newborn, Program Coordinator and Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant, states “Dramatic benefits are incalculable. There truly is no other single action by which a mother can so impact the present and future health of her baby. All of these services are provided free...because breastfeeding is THAT important”.

Mothers in need of breastfeeding support are welcome to call TLC Newborn at (772)923-9182.

The Indian River County Healthy Start Coalition develops and supports a local system of care to optimize the health of moms, babies and their families living in Indian River County. The Coalition is an administrative office that oversees the funding and services for six programs; MomCare, Healthy Families, Healthy Start Care Coordination, Belly Beautiful, TLC Newborn and Parents as Teachers. The Healthy Start Coalition office is located at 333 17<sup>th</sup> Street Suite R, Vero Beach. For more information visit [www.irhealthystartcoalition.org](http://www.irhealthystartcoalition.org) or to reach Ms. Berry, call 772-563-9118 or email her at [Andrea@irhealthystart.org](mailto:Andrea@irhealthystart.org).

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