

Health Unit Media Release

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Tri-County breastfeeding initiation rates high, but duration short

Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of an infant's life, and continued breastfeeding up to two years of age and beyond. A recent survey of the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit shows that **84.9% of mothers initiate breastfeeding** within the first two days after the baby is born. Within one month postpartum, however, this decreases to 71% of women breastfeeding their babies. By 3 months of age, only 59.6% of women are breastfeeding their babies, and **at 6 months postpartum this number has decreased to 46.8%.**

"The majority of women make the decision of whether or not to breastfeed before they are pregnant," says Dianne Oickle, Registered Dietitian with the Health Unit. In fact, the survey results showed that **women who decided to breastfeed their baby before becoming pregnant were 3.4 times more likely to initiate breastfeeding than those who decided after their baby was born.** "The survey results also showed that women who breastfeed their baby are also more likely to introduce solid foods later, further increasing the nutritional benefits of breastmilk," Oickle says.

The top two reasons given by women who participated in the survey for stopping breastfeeding were not having enough or having poor quality of milk, and baby not sucking well at breast. Both of these issues can often be addressed with the support of a public health nurse, other health care professional with skills in teaching breastfeeding, or breastfeeding support groups such as La Leche League to help with latch and establishing a good milk supply.

In Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, breastfeeding mothers and babies are invited to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week by participating in the **Quintessence Breastfeeding Challenge on Saturday, October 3, 2009.** The event will be held at the Ontario Early Years Centre, 166 Pearl St. East Brockville, from 10:00 – 11:30 am. The challenge is for the most children breastfeeding simultaneously in a set geographic area – province, territory, state or country at 11:00 am local time. A Public Health Nurse and a La Leche League Leader will be available to answer your questions breastfeeding. For more information about the Breastfeeding Challenge, please contact Julie Larose, 613-925-0067, or visit the website: www.babyfriendly.ca

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