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Greene County



Greene County Public Health

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Press Release

For Immediate Release
July 18, 2022

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August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month

Communities Can Work Together to Provide Support for Breastfeeding Mothers

XENIA, OHIO – August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month, and World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) will be celebrated Aug. 1-7 this year. Breastfeeding has many known health benefits for mother and baby and is widely accepted as an effective strategy to promote positive health outcomes for both mothers and their babies. Research suggests that breastfeeding is a key factor in reducing risk of disease for both mothers and infants, including respiratory illness, ear infections, allergies, and some cancers. A woman’s early experience with breastfeeding can affect whether and how long she continues to breastfeed and providing support at every level can help reduce barriers to breastfeeding.

To help raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted have signed a proclamation naming August Ohio Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This year, Ohio will adopt the theme “Step Up For Breastfeeding: Educate and Support.” This theme focuses on the role we all play in the survival, health and well-being of all, and the work we do to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding worldwide.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for approximately 6 months after birth. Furthermore, the AAP supports continued breastfeeding, along with appropriate complementary foods introduced at about 6 months, if mutually desired by mother and child for 2 years or beyond. Communities and related programs play a vital role in helping women reach these breastfeeding recommendations by providing education and support at the most crucial times in the perinatal period.

The Ohio Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program offers breastfeeding support to Ohio families by providing prenatal education as well as appointments with lactation professionals. One of the most important ways businesses and communities can support breastfeeding is to help mothers feel comfortable nursing in public. Businesses can show their support by placing a universal sign for breastfeeding support in their windows and educate their staff about the acceptance of Ohio law (Section 3781.55 of the Ohio Revised Code), which allows breastfeeding in public. Businesses have access to The Ohio Workplace PLUS Toolkit, which can help with supporting their lactating employees and providing a private space (other than a bathroom) to pump. This will help increase employee retention and reduce medical costs. Child Care centers have access to training materials and can learn more about obtaining a breastfeeding friendly designation. These programs play an

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important role in supporting breastfeeding mothers and their infants by welcoming breastfeeding mothers and making sure staff members are trained to handle breast milk and follow mothers' feeding plans. Hospitals also can join the Ohio First Steps for Healthy Babies initiative as an indication that they are dedicated to supporting new mothers who choose to breastfeed. Learn more about these initiatives and resources at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Breastfeeding>.

For more information about breastfeeding, Greene County can call the Greene County Public Health WIC office at 937-374-5641 (Xenia) or 937-878-4093 (Fairborn), or the Ohio Statewide Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-888-588-3423.

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