



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

# NEWS RELEASE

Office of Communications  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

4300 Cherry Creek Dr. S.  
Denver, CO 80246

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Aug. 1, 2012

**CONTACT:**

Brandon Williams  
Public Information Officer  
Prevention Services Division  
720-314-8299  
[Brandon.Williams@state.co.us](mailto:Brandon.Williams@state.co.us)

## **Colorado ranks No. 1 in breastfeeding during baby's first six months**

DENVER—Colorado ranks first in the nation for mothers who exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months of their lives, according to a [nationwide breastfeeding report card](#) released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than one in four (26.6 percent) Colorado infants received only breast milk during those formative months, making them far less likely to develop health problems such as infections, asthma and childhood obesity.

“Breastfeeding is one of our best protections against childhood obesity,” said Dr. Chris Urbina, executive director and chief medical officer for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. “And yet, while we’ve made significant progress in Colorado, nearly three of every four Colorado mothers are not taking full advantage of the health benefits of mother’s milk.”

While Colorado is the leanest state in the nation for adults, the state ranks 29th in childhood obesity. One in five Colorado adults and one in seven Colorado kids are obese. The department has identified obesity as one of Colorado’s 10 Winnable Battles and has begun working with public and private partners statewide on proven strategies to reduce the impact of obesity on public health.

One of those strategies is breastfeeding. Mother’s milk helps regulate the hormone that affects a child’s appetite and body fat. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, infants who are never breastfed are 32 percent more likely to become obese during childhood than those who are ever breastfed. Breastfed babies also are less likely to develop acute ear infections, respiratory tract diseases, diabetes and sudden infant death syndrome.

Extensive health department outreach and legal protections for breastfeeding mothers have helped increase the number of Colorado mothers who breastfeed. A 2004 state law established the right to breastfeed in public, and a 2008 law mandated workplace accommodations for nursing mothers. The department has implemented several initiatives to encourage mothers to breastfeed:

- Business Case for Breastfeeding – a 2009 statewide training for employers on how to accommodate employees who breastfeed, comply with the law and see a return on their investments
- Colorado Can Do 5! – a statewide 2008-10 training for all 53 birthing hospitals in Colorado on five maternity practices proven to support continued breastfeeding in new mothers. The Colorado Can Do 5! model now is being implemented in more than half of Colorado hospitals and replicated in cities and states across the country.
- Colorado Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – Since 2009, WIC further enhanced breastfeeding support for low-income mothers through an improved food package and greater access to breastfeeding peer counselors, lactation support and breast pumps.

Despite Colorado progress on breastfeeding, too many mothers do not continue breastfeeding long enough. (Colorado ranks 18<sup>th</sup> for breastfeeding at 12 months.) Also, too many employers do not accommodate nursing mothers. (The health department still receives complaints.) And too many hospitals are not yet designated “baby friendly” by the [Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative](#), a global effort to encourage and recognize hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for infant feeding. (Only 8 percent of Colorado births occur at baby-friendly hospitals.)

“We want to be a society where all mothers are able to breastfeed easily – at home, at work, at school, in the park or wherever they may be,” said Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment breastfeeding specialist Jennifer Dellaport.

For more information about the department’s Winnable Battle on obesity, including a planned Colorado summit on hospital support for breastfeeding, go to <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/winnableBattles/obesity.html>.