

New public health goals tackle obstacles to breastfeeding success

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For the first time, the barriers to breastfeeding are being addressed at the highest level of government. With the release today of Healthy People 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has targeted the new 10-year goals for our nation's health - and supporting breastfeeding is prominent among them.

"This is a major step forward for [mothers](#) and babies," says Gerald Calnen, MD, President of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. For decades, we've been telling mothers to try harder. With the Healthy People 2020 goals, we are actually helping mothers to succeed."

The new public health targets, released today, address maternity care and workplace accommodations for nursing mothers, two major stumbling blocks for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

A recent CDC survey found that maternity centers earned an average grade of 65% for infant feeding care, and just 3.8% of U.S. births occur in facilities that have earned Baby Friendly Certification. Baby Friendly facilities meet standards set by UNICEF and the [World Health Organization](#) for high-quality breastfeeding care.

By 2020, the goals call for increasing the percentage of Baby Friendly Hospitals to 8% and for increasing the proportion of U.S. workplaces that accommodate working mothers to express milk or breastfeed their infants during the workday from 25% to 38%.

The goals also target formula supplementation of healthy [newborn infants](#) during the maternity hospital stay. In 2006, 26% of healthy breastfed [newborns](#) were fed formula in the hospital. The goals aim to cut this rate to 15% by 2020.

In addition, the Healthy People 2020 goals set targets for initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. Currently, 75% of babies born in the U.S. are initially breastfed, but rates fall to 43% at 6 months and 22% by 12 months. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be fed only breastmilk for the first 6 months of life, but only 13% of babies in the U.S. meet this breastfeeding standard.

Healthy People 2020 aims to increase rates to 82% ever-breastfed, 61% at 6 months, and 34% at 1 year. Exclusive [breastfeeding](#) goals are set for 44% at 3 months and 24% at 6 months.

"By making maternity care and workplace support part of the Healthy People 2020 goals, policymakers are recognizing what mothers already know," Dr. Calnen says. "We need to change the system so that hospitals, employers, and the general public work together to empower mothers to achieve the best [infant feeding](#) goals."

More information:

www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/12/20101202a.html

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

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