

Breast-feeding still less common for black babies, CDC says

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Racial gap suggests need for additional, targeted support, experts say.

(HealthDay)—While more black mothers are breast-feeding their babies, they're still far less likely to do so than Hispanic or white women, according to a new U.S. study.

Researchers analyzed data on breast-feeding in the United States between 2000 and 2008 and found that the number of infants who were ever breast-fed increased from just over 70 percent to nearly 75 percent during that period.

Overall, the proportion of infants breast-fed at 6 months rose from about 35 percent to 44 percent, and the number breast-fed at 12 months increased from 16 percent to about 23 percent, the study authors noted.

But rates of breast-feeding by [black women](#) were consistently lower than among [Hispanics](#) and whites, according to the study in the Feb. 8 issue of the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), published by the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

"Breast-feeding is good for the mother and for the infant—and the striking news here is, hundreds of thousands more babies are being breast-fed than in past years, and this increase has been seen across most racial and ethnic groups," CDC director Dr. Tom Frieden said in an agency news release.

However, he added that "despite these increases, many mothers who want to breast-feed are still not getting the support they need from hospitals, doctors or employers. We must redouble our efforts to support mothers who want to breast-feed."

In 2000, about 47 percent of black mothers started to breast-feed, compared with about 72 percent of whites and nearly 78 percent of Hispanics, the investigators found. In 2008, nearly 59 percent of black mothers started to breast-feed, compared with about 75 percent of whites and 80 percent of Hispanics.

The findings suggest that black mothers may face unique challenges and require additional, targeted support to help them breast-feed, the researchers said.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be breast-fed for one year—exclusively for the first six months and in conjunction with foods introduced over the next six months. But this study found that fewer than 30 percent of all [infants](#) were breast-fed for a full year, which suggests that all mothers need more support to continue breast-feeding, the study authors pointed out in a CDC news release.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health has more about [breast-feeding](#).

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