

# Uninsured parents don't take breastfeeding classes, even though breast is best

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Just 12 percent of parents without insurance coverage take breastfeeding support classes that can offer crucial support and encourage new moms to breastfeed, according to a new University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusively [breastfeeding](#) until babies are 6 months of age followed by breastfeeding in combination with the introduction of complementary foods until at least 12 months of age. However, only about half of moms in the US are still breastfeeding at 6 months.

Breastfeeding can be challenging, so [health care providers](#) encourage new parents to take classes that provide information on benefits and tips on breastfeeding while managing other responsibilities like caring for other children or going back to work.

In this month's poll, 452 parents of children aged 0 to 3, across the United States, were asked if they attended a breastfeeding class.

"The good news is 40 percent of first-time parents reported attending a class," says Michelle Moniz, M.D., an OB/GYN and researcher at the University of Michigan Medical School.

But the poll showed that [insurance coverage](#) really matters: only 12 percent of uninsured parents attended a class, compared with 28 percent of parents on private insurance and 29 percent of parents on public

insurance.

"The poll's results showed that attendance at classes was not related to a parent's race/ethnicity, income or education," says Lauren O'Connell, M.D., a pediatrician and researcher at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

"This was surprising because previous studies have shown that moms who are African-American or have lower incomes or less education are less likely to breastfeed," says O'Connell.

"Since parents without insurance are not attending, we need to examine the issue of cost. Breastfeeding classes tend to cost between \$30 and \$80. This amount may not be affordable for those with limited financial resources for medical care."

The researchers suggest that government leaders and health care providers work together to provide better access and support to make sure babies get the best start possible.

They suggest physicians write prescriptions for classes as a routine part of pre-natal care; hospitals provide classes before parents take newborns home; or that neighborhood or faith-based groups sponsor and provide breastfeeding classes.

"There are so many benefits to breastfeeding," says Moniz. "Babies who breastfeed have lower rates of infection, obesity and diabetes. Mothers who breastfeed have lower rates of postpartum depression, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer.

"We want all families to be able to take advantage of those benefits, not just those who have consistent insurance coverage, so we need to make providing affordable classes and other breastfeeding support a priority."

**More information:** [mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/%E2%80%9Cbreast-best%E2%80%9D-uninsured-parents-take-breastfeeding-classes-less-often](http://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/%E2%80%9Cbreast-best%E2%80%9D-uninsured-parents-take-breastfeeding-classes-less-often)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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