

Good news, bad news in U.S. breastfeeding report

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(HealthDay)—Most new mothers in the United States start out

breastfeeding, but many stop sooner than recommended, a new federal government report says.

Of the nearly 4 million babies born in 2015, about 83 percent started out [breastfeeding](#), but fewer than 36 percent were still breastfeeding at 12 months, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nearly 6 in 10 babies (57.6 percent) were breastfeeding at 6 months, but only 1 in 4 were exclusively breastfeeding, according to the report. At 3 months, 46.7 percent were exclusively breastfeeding.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively for about the first six months of life.

The report said 49 percent of employers provide worksite support programs for breastfeeding mothers, and that more than a quarter of babies are born in facilities that provide recommended care for breastfeeding mothers and their infants.

Breastfeeding benefits babies and mothers alike. Breastfed infants have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, type 2 diabetes, ear and respiratory infections, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Breastfeeding also can help reduce a mother's risk of [high blood pressure](#), type 2 diabetes and ovarian and breast cancer.

"We are pleased that most U.S. [babies](#) start out breastfeeding and over half are still breastfeeding at 6 [months](#) of age," said Dr. Ruth Petersen, director of CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity.

"The more we support breastfeeding mothers, the more likely they will be able to reach their breastfeeding goals," she added in an agency news release.

Hospitals and care providers can support breastfeeding by helping [new mothers](#) identify covered benefits, such as breast pumps and access to lactation consultants, to help them when they return to home, school and/or work, according to the CDC.

"To reach their breastfeeding goals, [mothers](#) need worksite accommodations and continuity of care through consistent, collaborative and high-quality breastfeeding services. They need the support from their doctors, lactation consultants and counselors, and peer counselors," the agency said.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [breastfeeding](#).

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