

High marks in national breastfeeding care review

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Ann Kellams, MD, is a board-certified lactation consultant who helped found the UVA Breastfeeding Medicine Program. Credit: Dan Addison/University of Virginia

University of Virginia Medical Center and UVA Children's have earned

excellent scores for their support of breastfeeding in a nationwide survey of hospitals conducted by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

UVA received a 91 out of 100 on the Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care survey, far exceeding the Virginia average of 81 and the national average of 79.

As [healthcare providers](#) have embraced the importance of breastfeeding in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to how hospitals and health systems can support new mothers with breastfeeding their babies. Current guidelines call for exclusive breastfeeding for a baby's first 6 months, when possible, followed by breastfeeding along with other foods until at least 12 months of age. Improving support practices in the hospital has been shown to improve the success of the more than 4 out of 5 mothers who desire to breastfeed.

The survey evaluates hospitals on several measures that help support breastfeeding, including:

- Providing immediate skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby after birth;
- Keeping mothers and their infants together throughout their hospital stay;
- Feeding education, including support for new mothers to help them overcome any challenges with breastfeeding;
- Supporting mothers before and after discharge from the hospital, including in-person follow-up visits for lactation support; and
- Having written policies and special training for all hospital staff to support the management of breastfeeding.

The [survey results](#) are a product of dedicated effort over several years by a [large team](#) at UVA Children's and UVA Medical Center, said UVA

pediatrician Ann Kellams, MD, a board-certified lactation consultant who helped found the UVA Breastfeeding Medicine Program.

"These results are only possible thanks to tremendous collaboration from [team members](#) in our prenatal clinics, our maternity and postpartum inpatient units and our Breastfeeding Medicine Program, along with the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Medicine, Pediatrics and Anesthesiology," she said. "Our group is proud to work with new mothers and their babies, and we are always looking for more ways to provide them with the best possible support as they begin [breastfeeding](#)."

Provided by University of Virginia

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