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Support Breastfeeding for a Healthier Planet

Every year, August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month around the world. Most of us have heard of the many benefits of breastfeeding; babies who are breastfed have fewer ear infections, colds and stomach problems and a lower risk of SIDS, asthma, eczema, diabetes and leukemia. Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and type 2 diabetes. These benefits are more than enough to support breastfeeding, but did you know that breastfeeding is a healthy choice for our planet as well?

Breastmilk is a renewable resource; it's a complete food for infants that has the smallest carbon footprint. Breastfeeding doesn't consume large amounts of energy and it doesn't pollute or emit greenhouse gasses. At most, a nursing mother may need to eat an extra 500 calories per day, which has very little impact on the planet. Manufacturing infant formula, on the other hand, pollutes the earth and the air. It requires milking cows with a machine, turning that milk into powder, adding and taking away ingredients, and testing for safety. Special formulas must be processed even more. Packaging has to be made to store and ship the formula. This process pollutes the earth and air with the fuels used to power the factories and the waste they produce.

Breastmilk comes ready-to-feed, no prep needed! When a baby nurses at the mother's breast there is no plastic waste. If a mother pumps her milk, the amount of waste is still very small. Formula feeding creates extra waste with containers, lids, scoops, prep tools and bottles. These non-recyclable materials end up in our landfills and our oceans. Breastfeeding also has a simple delivery system-the milk goes direct from mom's breast into baby's mouth! But formula must be transported from the factories, to shipping and distributing centers, and out to stores, where parents must buy it to bring home. All this travel pollutes the air.

When it comes to feeding babies, it's clear that breastfeeding has the smallest impact on the earth. And because breastfeeding means healthy people, there is less environmental impact from the treatment of diseases for years to come!

This huge burden to protect the planet cannot be placed on mothers' shoulders alone. Everyone- family, friends, workplaces, the public and government - must take responsibility for their part to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. Every one of us must make it easy for moms to breastfeed their babies.

At Clermont County WIC, we have continued to serve our WIC families during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that includes breastfeeding support. Our breastfeeding staff is always on call to help through our texting program and our breastfeeding hotline. Our drive up clinic provides breast pumps and other earth-friendly breastfeeding supplies to WIC moms. Moms who exclusively breastfeed receive extra WIC foods. We work with hospitals, doctor's offices and community groups to support moms at every phase of their breastfeeding journey.

We all want to protect moms, babies and our planet. The time to take action is now. Let's support breastfeeding for a healthier planet!