

Breastfeeding

DEFINITION

Breastfeeding is the percentage of newborn infants who are exclusively breastfed at the time of hospital discharge.

SIGNIFICANCE

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) identifies breastfeeding as the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants and recognizes breastfeeding as a critical component in achieving optimal infant and child health, growth and development. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months after birth, continuous breastfeeding for at least 12 months after birth, and thereafter as long as mutually desired.¹

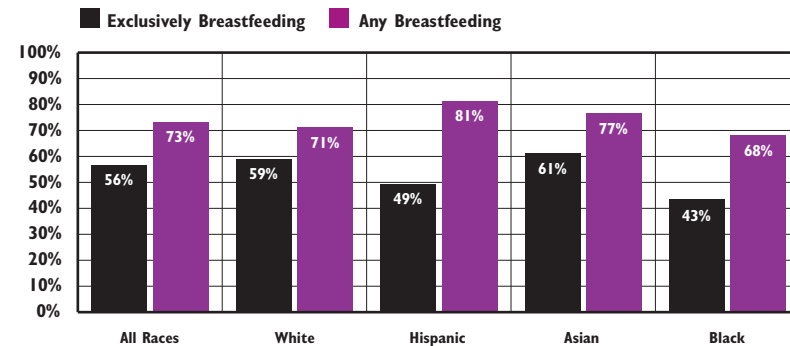
Breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition for newborns, and decreases the incidence of diarrhea, lower respiratory infections and ear infections. Breastfeeding has been linked to decreases in sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), childhood obesity, diabetes, allergies, asthma, lymphoma and other illnesses; improved cognitive development and school performance in children; reduced incidence of child abuse; and improved maternal health, including reduced rates of breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding provides significant social and economic benefits including reduced cost to the family, reduced health care costs and reduced employee absenteeism.^{2,3}

Nationally, women who are older, have higher incomes or are more educated are more likely to breastfeed than their peers. Asian and Pacific Islander women in the U.S. are the most likely to breastfeed their infants followed by Hispanic and White women.⁴

Breastfeeding can be effectively promoted by training health professionals how to support breastfeeding among post-partum mothers, prenatal and postnatal education of mothers, hospital policies that promote breastfeeding, and referrals to lactation support groups.⁵

Healthy People 2010, the nation's health agenda, established target breastfeeding rates of 75% at birth, 50% at six months and 25% at one year.⁶ Breastfeeding rates in the United States increased significantly between 1993 and 2006. Seventy-seven percent of infants in the 2005-2006 birth cohort were reported as ever being breastfed, exceeding the *Healthy People 2010* target.⁷ *Healthy People 2010* recommends increasing breastfeeding rates among those at highest risk through increased education for health care providers and new parents, additional support of breastfeeding from employers and the community, and greater media portrayal of breastfeeding as the normal method of infant feeding.⁸

Breastfeeding Rates by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2006-2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program, 2006-2007. *Any Breastfeeding* refers to those infants exclusively breastfed and those fed breast milk in combination with formula. Hispanics can be of any race.

- ◆ In Rhode Island between 2006 and 2007, Black and Hispanic mothers were less likely to exclusively breastfeed than their Asian and White peers. However, Hispanic and Asian mothers were more likely to report any breastfeeding than women in other racial and ethnic groups.⁹
- ◆ While the consensus of the scientific community remains that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is best for the majority of infants, several of the same positive health outcomes are associated, to a lesser extent, with partial breastfeeding.¹⁰
- ◆ Between 2003 and 2007, more than half (57%) of all women who gave birth in Rhode Island chose to exclusively breastfeed their children, almost one-third (28%) chose to exclusively formula feed, and 12% chose to use a combination of breast and formula feeding.¹¹
- ◆ Of new mothers in Rhode Island between 2004 and 2007 who were surveyed approximately three months after giving birth, 73% reported having ever breastfed. Fifty-two percent of these mothers reported continued breastfeeding at the time of the survey.¹²
- ◆ In 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted a law that provides mothers with the explicit right to breastfeed in public places.

Table 15.

Breastfeeding Rates, Rhode Island, 2003-2007

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED	NUMBER BREAST AND FORMULA FEEDING	NUMBER EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING
Barrington	695	23	573	86%	82%
Bristol	927	41	599	69%	65%
Burrillville	703	27	408	62%	58%
Central Falls	1,994	569	876	72%	44%
Charlestown	400	7	296	76%	74%
Coventry	1,746	51	1,029	62%	59%
Cranston	4,235	392	2,431	67%	57%
Cumberland	1,606	90	1,067	72%	66%
East Greenwich	606	23	452	78%	75%
East Providence	2,575	193	1,449	64%	56%
Exeter	272	3	199	74%	73%
Foster	229	15	163	78%	71%
Glocester	366	17	238	70%	65%
Hopkinton	490	21	339	73%	69%
Jamestown	200	5	164	85%	82%
Johnston	1,377	100	724	60%	53%
Lincoln	879	51	553	69%	63%
Little Compton	107	3	89	86%	83%
Middletown	979	40	749	81%	77%
Narragansett	506	24	367	77%	73%
New Shoreham	49	0	46	94%	94%
Newport	1,517	79	1,057	75%	70%
North Kingstown	1,353	59	919	72%	68%
North Providence	1,868	188	985	63%	53%
North Smithfield	423	20	274	70%	65%
Pawtucket	5,421	959	2,766	69%	51%
Portsmouth	772	22	597	80%	77%
Providence	14,579	3,416	7,172	73%	49%
Richmond	403	17	282	74%	70%
Scituate	472	24	322	73%	68%
Smithfield	691	26	451	69%	65%
South Kingstown	1,250	40	942	79%	75%
Tiverton	363	15	242	71%	67%
Warren	512	16	308	63%	60%
Warwick	4,136	182	2,441	63%	23%
West Greenwich	254	13	169	3%	67%
West Warwick	2,023	101	1,069	90%	53%
Westerly	1,186	55	824	74%	69%
Woonsocket	3,048	409	1,233	54%	40%
Unknown	3	1	0	NA	NA
Core Cities	28,582	5,533	14,173	69%	50%
Remainder of State	35,630	1,803	20,691	63%	58%
Rhode Island	61,215	7,337	34,864	69%	57%

Notes

The number of births screened may differ from the total number of births reported elsewhere in the Factbook as not all documented births received a screening.

“Percent Any Breastfeeding” includes infants fed breast milk in combination with formula and those exclusively breastfed.

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program Database and Maternal and Child Health Database, 2003-2007. *Breastfeeding* is defined as breastfeeding as intended feeding method at hospital discharge. Births to Rhode Island women that occurred outside Rhode Island are not included.

Core Cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References

- ^{1,5} American Academy of Pediatrics. (2005). Breastfeeding and the use of human milk – Policy Statement in *Pediatrics*, 115(2).
- ² Wall, G. (2007). *Outcomes of breastfeeding versus formula feeding*. Retrieved January 23, 2008 from www.llli.org/docs/Outcomes_of_breastfeeding_June_2007.pdf
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). *Child Health USA 2007 Data Book*. Retrieved January 13, 2009 from www.mchb.hrsa.gov
- ⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005). *The CDC Guide to Breastfeeding Interventions*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ^{6,8} Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy people 2010, conference edition, Vol. 2*. (2000). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- ⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). *Breastfeeding in the United States: Findings from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, 1999-2006*. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics.

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