



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Breastfeeding is Best*

*Racial and Geographic Differences in Breastfeeding – United States, 2011-2015*

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

Proper nutrition is critical for the early growth and development of a newborn. The best way to feed a baby is breastfeeding.

Dr. Erica Anstey is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding. Welcome to the show, Erica.

[Dr. Anstey] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Dooling] Erica, what percentage of women breastfeed their newborns?

[Dr. Anstey] Most mothers *want* to breastfeed. About eighty one percent of U.S. infants start out breastfeeding, but most mothers don't breastfeed as long as recommended. Unfortunately, about 50 percent are breastfeeding at six months. Our nation's breastfeeding rates are different, depending on where a mother lives and other factors, such as poverty and race. We are very concerned about the racial disparity in breastfeeding rates. For example, only about 66 percent of black infants are ever breastfed, compared to about 84 percent of white infants. We need to learn more about the barriers to breastfeeding for black mothers so we can better support them to meet their breastfeeding goals.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the benefits of breastmilk for a baby?

[Dr. Anstey] There are *so* many benefits of breast milk. It really is the best and most complete nutrition for infants. Breastfeeding also protects infants from many common infant illnesses, such as diarrhea, ear infections, and respiratory infections. And infants who breastfeed have a lower risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, diabetes, and obesity.

[Dr. Dooling] Does breastfeeding provide any health benefits for a new mom?

[Dr. Anstey] Yes. We know that breastfeeding lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease for mothers.

[Dr. Dooling] How long should a mother breastfeed her baby?

[Dr. Anstey] Well, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers and infants exclusively breastfeed for about the first six months, and continue breastfeeding through at least the first year.

[Dr. Dooling] Give our listeners some advice for successful breastfeeding.

[Dr. Anstey] Breastfeeding mothers need support from their families, friends, and doctors, even before they deliver their babies. Mothers who know more about all the benefits of breastfeeding are more likely to breastfeed, so it's important that they learn about breastfeeding during pregnancy. Mothers are more likely to be successful if they exclusively breastfeed right from the start. As any new mother will tell you, breastfeeding isn't always easy, so having a strong support system while learning how to breastfeed can make a big difference. Many mothers may also need help from a lactation support person to overcome challenges. For mothers going back to work, it's important to plan ahead and talk to your employer. Make sure that you'll have a private space and enough time to express your milk during the work day. Finally, I would say that it takes practice and patience to learn how to breastfeed, so if you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it. Your doctor or nurse should be able to help you find resources in your community.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about breastfeeding?

[Dr. Anstey] Listeners can go to our website: [cdc.gov/breastfeeding](http://cdc.gov/breastfeeding).

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Erica. I've been talking today with Dr. Erica Anstey about the benefits of breastfeeding.

Newborns should be breastfed exclusively for the first six months and continue breastfeeding, with complementary foods, through at least the first year of life. New moms: Help your baby get off to a great start by providing the *best* nutrition available.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.