



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2015
PH15-084

CONTACT: [Anita Gore](#)
[Orville Thomas](#)
(916) 440-7259

More California Mothers are Breastfeeding in the Hospital

SACRAMENTO — California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today announced California's in-hospital breastfeeding initiation rates are on the rise according to annual California In-hospital breastfeeding data published by CDPH.

"Exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life is the most important nutrition practice a mother can embrace to improve the immediate and long-term health of her infant," Dr. Smith said. "Hospital maternity care practices play an important role in ensuring new mothers can meet their personal goals for breastfeeding."

In-hospital breastfeeding initiation rates have improved between 2010 (baseline year) and 2014. The rate of any breastfeeding increased from 90.8 percent to 93.5 percent, while exclusive breastfeeding rates increased from 56.6 percent to 66.6 percent. Improvements were seen across all racial/ethnic groups. However, racial/ethnic disparities in breastfeeding initiation persist. Only three out of five African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic women exclusively breastfed their infant while in the hospital, compared to four out of five White women.

Among the factors that may have contributed to the rise in in-hospital breastfeeding rates is the work that CDPH and its many partners have done to promote public health and healthcare policies that support a mother's choice to breastfeed in the hospital. Currently, there are 76 Baby-Friendly™ Hospitals in California, with an additional 80 California hospitals at various stages in the four-phase process to achieve the designation, according to Baby-Friendly USA. "Baby-Friendly" is a designation for hospitals that have met UNICEF/WHO's Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) criteria for supporting optimum infant feeding and care. The Hospital Infant Feeding Act (California Health & Safety Code §123366) required that by January 1, 2014, all California hospitals with a perinatal unit have a comprehensive infant feeding policy that supports breastfeeding. Also, California Health & Safety Code §123367 requires that by 2025, all maternity hospitals adopt the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" per the BFHI, or an alternate process, such as the CDPH [Model Hospital Policy Recommendations](#).

Many CDPH programs and initiatives promote breastfeeding. For information on these CDPH programs and initiatives, as well as resources that can help pregnant or breastfeeding women, visit:

- [Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program](#)
- [Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\) Program](#)
- [California Department of Public Health Breastfeeding Web Page](#)
- [Breastfeeding Data](#)

www.cdph.ca.gov

