

Special Report

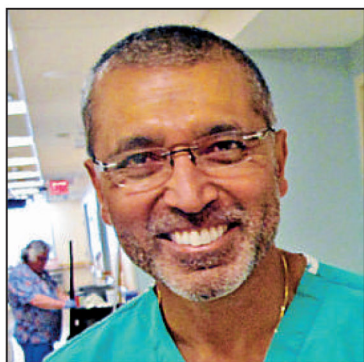
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Editorial, 2 Commentary, 3



"When people talk about the childhood obesity epidemic, they usually talk about what they can do for school-age kids. But prevention starts with babies. . . . We've got strong evidence that formula-fed babies are more likely to become obese children, at greater risk of a wide range of sicknesses and illnesses."

JAMIE JEFFREY
Director, CAMC
Children's Medicine Center



"Children who were breastfed have fewer visits to pediatricians and hospitals, they get greater immunities of many kinds, and they are less likely to be obese. The mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancer is also reduced. It's important to tell mothers those things. It can lead to lifelong benefits."

DR. KIRAN PATEL
Obstetrician,
Thomas Memorial Hospital



"It should be common knowledge that children who were breastfed are going to be healthier and at less risk of obesity. But doctors don't always tell mothers. Some are gung-ho. Some leave it up to the mom to figure it out. If we want most West Virginians to be informed about this, it should be taught in the schools."

DR. MARY BOYD
President, W.Va. chapter of
American Academy of Pediatrics



"When I had my kids, [we] didn't know breastfeeding could give them greater immunities. Two of my kids had allergies. Would they have, if I'd breastfed? I'll never know. But now that we know, it's really important for every new mother to have that information."

DENISE SMITH
Director, Right from the Start



"Baby formula was created in the late 1800s for babies in dire situations, when maybe the mother died. Then the marketing people got hold of it, and it's gone way over the top to where mothers scrounge to pay for formula that's nowhere near as good for the baby as the free milk in their own bodies."

CHRISTINE COMPTON
Director,
W.Va. Breastfeeding Alliance



"So many good things come from breastfeeding — the reduced risk of diabetes and childhood illnesses, the immune properties it delivers to the baby. I really encourage new mothers not to give up if it's tough at first. Keep trying. You'll get there."

GINA WOOD
Manager, W.Va. Diabetes
Prevention and Control

'OUNCES OF PREVENTION'

Breastfeeding lowers risk of obesity, many other diseases

By Kate Long
Staff writer

AT 25 of West Virginia's 29 childbirth hospitals, when a mother goes home with her newborn baby, the hospital staff hands her a diaper bag full of baby formula — even if she is breastfeeding.

"We hate that," said nurse Jamie Peden, breastfeeding consultant at Charleston Area Medical Center. "It turns the nursing staff into formula company marketing agents. It also makes mothers think the hospital is encouraging them to feed their babies formula when we're not."

Three years ago, to Peden's relief, CAMC quit giving breastfeeding mothers bags of formula. Instead, they launched a campaign to encourage breastfeeding.

They had reason to do so. Twenty years of research confirms that breastfeeding lowers children's risk of a long list of medical problems, from asthma, allergies and bronchitis to sudden infant death syndrome.

Babies who are breastfed are also less likely to be obese as children, research shows.

"We're in the middle of a childhood obesity epidemic, and we've got strong evidence that formula-fed babies are more likely to become obese children, at greater risk of a wide range of sicknesses and illnesses," said



THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

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COMING MONDAY:

More moms nursing in central W.Va.

NEXT SUNDAY:

Breastfeeding moms, in their own words

Dr. Jamie Jeffrey, director of CAMC's Children's Medicine Center. "Given that, it makes no sense to be giving nursing mothers bags of formula, does it?"

"It's like the hospital handing heart patients free Big Macs," said Christine Compton, West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance director. "Or diabetics free doughnuts."

West Virginia has the nation's third-highest obesity rate and the nation's third-highest rate of formula-fed babies. "That's not a coincidence," Jeffrey said.

SEE HOSPITALS, 4E



KATE LONG | Sunday Gazette-Mail photos

In early September, Jenny Morris, certified lactation consultant, answered questions for Sissonville mother Amber Leigh Knopp at Thomas Hospital. "It can take awhile for mom and baby to get it going smoothly," Morris said. "That's normal. It's a learned art."

ONE FAMILY AT A TIME

'About 4,000 mommies have my phone number'

By Kate Long
Staff writer

READY TO GO home with her new baby, Vanessa Walker was still making up her mind. "I'm thinking I'll bottle-feed in the day and breastfeed at night," she said.

Obstetrician Dr. Kiran Patel strolled into her Thomas Memorial room. "Want to hear what I have to say about that?" he asked.

"Sure!" Walker said. "You're my doctor. I love you." Two days earlier, he delivered her baby.

"For the next six months," Patel said, "the best one thing you can do is to feed your baby nothing but your own milk." She nodded and raised her eyebrows. "If you do, you'll give yourself and your baby a great gift," he said, smiling.

"Breastfeeding gives your baby lots of immunities, but let's look about what it can do for you," he said. "It lowers your risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer . . . And makes it easier for you to lose weight you gained during pregnancy . . ."

His little speech took maybe three minutes. He slipped in the fact that nursing the baby lowers a child's risk of obesity, pneumonia, diarrhea, allergies, stomach problems, diabetes, asthma, sudden infant death syndrome, etc. "You'd spend a lot less time at the pediatrician's office or the hospital," he said. "Fewer doctor bills."



"You're making me think," Walker said. "And it's free," he said, shrugging.

Breastfeeding consultant Jenny Morris was leaning against the wall. "I promise you, I didn't pay him to say any of that," she said. Everyone laughed. Patel and Walker hugged.

"If more doctors would talk straight like that, it would make a huge difference," Morris said, walking down the hall. "Especially if they'd do it before the baby's born. Of course, the way I see it, some breastfeeding is better than none."

'Mothers often aren't sure what to do'

Jenny Morris has a job most people don't know exists. She helps one mother at a

"A newborn's stomach holds about a teaspoon and a half, the size of the white ball," said WIC consultant Erica Mason. Within three days, it's the size of the pink ball. In 10 days, it's the size of the orange — about two ounces.

"New nursing babies eat small amounts often, about every hour, taking in immunities," Mason said. "That's normal. They stop when they're full. With a bottle, they can't do that."

time get the hang of breastfeeding, raising West Virginia's low breastfeeding rates one baby at a time.

She is a certified lactation consultant, employed by the Women Infant and Children's program. She is available to WIC mothers 24/7. "It's a crazy job," she said. "About 4,000 mommies have my cellphone number."

Her services could go for \$100 an hour on the private market. At Thomas Memorial, and CAMC Women and Children's Hospital, they are free.

She's been at it 14 years. Certain facts keep her going:

- Breastfeeding lowers a child's risk of

SEE JENNY, 4E



KATE LONG | Sunday Gazette-Mail

CAMC has stopped giving breastfeeding mothers bags of formula to take home, but 25 of West Virginia's birthing hospitals still do, even though research shows formula-fed babies have more doctor and hospital visits. Nationwide, more than 600 hospitals have joined a "Ban the Bag" movement.

Comments?

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HOSPITALS

FROM PAGE 1E

For decades, hospitals nationwide have given new mothers these bags, supplied by formula companies. "The hospitals sign contracts that say the company will give the hospital all the free formula it needs if the hospital will send every mother home with a bag of formula," Peden said. "It's been standard practice."

It's also been a lucrative practice. Mothers who take home free formula are more likely to give up breastfeeding, research shows. They are also more likely to feed their babies the brand in the gift bag.

Name-brand formula for one baby for a year costs about \$2,000. Generic costs about \$1,200.

Last year, the nation's largest formula company, Mead Johnson, manufacturer of Enfamil, had a 65 percent profit margin and took in \$3.7 billion.

Early in 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics reviewed 20 years of breastfeeding research and reported that, compared with formula-fed children, children who were breastfed are at significantly lower risk for:

- Obesity: 4 percent lower risk for each month of breastfeeding

- Bronchitis / pneumonia: 74 percent fewer hospitalizations

- Respiratory tract infections in first year: 72 percent fewer hospitalizations

- Sudden infant death syndrome: 36 percent lower risk

- Type 1 diabetes: up to 30 percent lower risk

- Middle ear infections: 50 percent fewer

- Serious colds and ear/throat infections: 63 percent lower risk

- Gastrointestinal infections: 64 percent lower risk

- Other conditions, including asthma, celiac (infant intestinal) disease, childhood inflammatory bowel disease, necrotizing enterocolitis (death of infant intestinal tissue), atopic dermatitis, eczema, and childhood leukemia.

If a mother breastfeeds, it lowers her risk of type 2 diabetes, ovarian and breast cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Breastfeeding mothers suffer less postpartum depression and lose weight more quickly after delivery.

The American Medical Association and the Centers for Disease Control now urge mothers to breastfeed at least six months if they can. So do the American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, and the dietician and obstetrician associations.

Breast milk contains antibodies, immunities and hormones no formula can duplicate, Jeffrey said. She speaks with passion.

"A few years back, we found

DID YOU KNOW?
BREASTFEEDING
LOWERS THE RISK OF ...

- obesity
- pneumonia
- bronchitis
- throat infections
- respiratory infections
- Type 1 diabetes
- intestinal infections
- dermatitis and eczema
- middle ear infections
- asthma
- leukemia
- SIDS
- colds

This information provided by
the Charleston Gazette
As part of the ongoing series
THE SHAPE WE'RE IN
An in-depth look at obesity in W.Va.

Photo: Getty Images
Sources: "Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk," the policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics, February 2012, Pediatrics.

KYLE SLAGLE | Sunday Gazette-Mail

Help spread the word about the benefits of breastfeeding. Find two full-size versions of this poster online at <http://bit.ly/Vpq1Wj> (white background) and <http://bit.ly/OizijC> (black background).

that 49 percent of our 9-year-old patients were already obese, already at risk of diabetes and heart disease. So yes, I get worked up. Prevention starts with babies."

Boosting bonding, banning bags

More than 600 hospitals have joined a national "Ban the Bag" movement, including two West Virginia hospitals — St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington and City Hospital in Martinsburg. CAMC and Greenbrier Valley give bags to bottle-feeding mothers only.

Kanawha County's two birthing hospitals are making changes well beyond formula bags. Instead of whisking new babies away immediately, CAMC and Thomas Memorial Hospital both now bring new babies to their mothers as soon as possible after birth — even after C-sections — so they can bond skin-to-skin.

"Research shows skin-to-skin in that first hour makes a big difference in bonding and breastfeeding," said CAMC obstetrics director Denise Burgess.

Both hospitals now employ breastfeeding consultants for new mothers. Both train all nursery staff. "Our breastfeeding rate has gone up 10 percent since we started in July," said Thomas obstetrics director Beth Hedrick.

CAMC is constructing more private rooms so all babies

can "room in" with mom and dad to cuddle and feed anytime. All Thomas rooms are already private.

Both hospitals aim to reduce their high rate of C-sections, which research says interferes with bonding and breastfeeding. About 53 percent of Thomas mothers have C-sections, compared with 43 percent at CAMC, 34 percent statewide and 30 percent nationwide.

"These changes will mean healthier children," said Nancy Tolliver, West Virginia Perinatal Partnership director.

Many doctors and nurses were trained "back when people assumed bottle-feeding and breastfeeding were equal options," she said. "It will take time to change directions."

'This is very much a fiscal issue'

Breastfeeding also saves families and governments money because it means fewer doctor and hospital visits and prescriptions, medical records show. In 1995, Kaiser Permanente found that babies who breastfed six months averaged \$1,400 less in yearly insurance claims than formula-fed babies did.

State and local governments are noticing.

New York City has launched a citywide effort to encourage breastfeeding, complete with subway posters and TV ads. Mayor Michael Bloomberg

convinced 27 hospitals to ditch the bags and require staff to sign out formula as they do medication.

It's a taxpayer issue, he says. According to a 2010 study in the American Academy of Pediatrics journal, Americans could save \$13 billion a year in medical bills if 90 percent of babies were exclusively breastfed for six months.

It's also an emotional issue. Government cannot require women to breastfeed like they require a vaccine. Bottle-feeding supporters call Bloomberg a heavy-handed food nanny and say the city is interfering with personal, family decisions and making bottle-feeding mothers feel guilty.

Bloomberg points out that even the formula industry's website says, "Breastfeeding is the preferred and recommended method of infant feeding."

Child advocates cite health inequality. Seventy-seven percent of higher-income women start out breastfeeding, compared with 54 percent of lower-income women. White women breastfeed far more than black women do.

According to CDC, low-income and black children have higher obesity and illness rates. About 60 percent of West Virginia's 20,000 new babies per year are born to women whose income is low enough to qualify for Medicaid.

The Trust for America's Health predicts that obesity-related diseases will cost West Virginia \$3.6 billion by 2030 if the state cannot control the obesity rate.

"This is very much a fiscal issue," said Don Perdue, chairman of the state House Health and Human Resources Committee. "The sooner people see that, the better."

Numbers are rising

Nationwide, 77 percent of newborns now start out nursing, compared to 60 percent in 1979, according to CDC.

In West Virginia, the numbers are lower. Fifty-five percent now start out nursing. At 6 months, it's 28 percent, compared to 47 percent nationally. At one year, it's 15 percent for West Virginia, 26 percent nationwide.

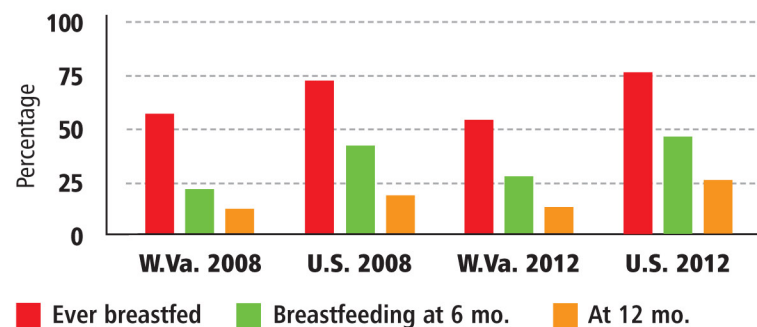
Still, West Virginia's numbers are rising too. The 6-month and one-year percentages jumped 25 percent between 2007 and 2011.

The lowest breastfeeding rates are in the coalfields, which also have the highest obesity and chronic disease rates. Only 14 percent nurse after six months, according to WIC statistics. The highest are in central West Virginia: 29 percent.

CAMC delivers about 3,000 babies a year from all over the coalfields. "A fair number are very young or high risk mothers," CAMC's Burgess said. "Some have had no prenatal care."

"A lot don't see the difference between breastfeeding and bottle-feeding," she said,

MORE BABIES NURSING LONGER



The number of West Virginia mothers who nurse their babies has jumped by 25 percent in the past four years, though West Virginia has the nation's third lowest rate of breastfeeding.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control

Research it yourself

- CDC analysis: Breastfeeding reduces obesity and sickness: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/breastfeeding_r2p.pdf
- American Academy of Pediatrics review of research: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/02/22/peds.2011-3552>
- Cost comparison for families: <http://kellymom.com/pregnancy/bf-prep/bfcostbenefits>
- Cost analysis for hospitals and governments: http://www.hmhbga.org/Reimbursement_White_Paper.pdf
- Formula industry website: <http://www.infantformula.org>
- Breastfeeding advocacy website: <http://www.naba-breastfeeding.org>
- 2012 State-by-state breastfeeding report card: <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard2.htm>
- "The Business Case for Breastfeeding": <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/business-case-for-breastfeeding>
- 50-state summary of breastfeeding laws: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/breast50.htm>

"but the time to be educated is not when they arrive at the hospital in labor. We need to reach them earlier."

"A lot of young mothers, when they come to us, think bottle-feeding and nursing are equal, that one's no better than the other," said Kay Groves, Summersville WIC office counselor. "Once they hear what breastfeeding can do, many say, 'I want that for my baby.'"

In 2010-11, CAMC asked 162 pregnant women about their choice. Mothers who bottle-fed their babies gave these reasons: lack of confidence that they could breastfeed; convenience; dislike of the idea of breastfeeding; work or school conflicts; past difficulty; a feeling that breastfeeding is not normal; lack of knowledge.

DHHR's highly praised Right from the Start program offers low-income moms help with breastfeeding and practical things they and their babies need. But the program is voluntary and has no advertising budget. Only 3,000 new moms enroll per year, out of about 12,000 who could.

Ultimately, "we need to make sure this is part of common knowledge, especially for teenagers," said Elkins pediatrician Mary Boyd, president of the West Virginia Academy of Pediatrics. "The only way I can see for that to happen is in the public schools."

The schools do not now routinely address the subject, said

Department of Education spokeswoman Liza Cordeiro. There is no state public awareness campaign.

Meanwhile, health costs soar. Obesity-related chronic disease cost West Virginians \$417 million in 2008, health-care economist Ken Thorpe estimates. It will top \$1 billion by 2018, he predicts.

Since 2007, the Legislature has funded training for about 180 breastfeeding specialists, "but many hospitals still have none," said Cinny Kittle, project director of the West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance.

Starting in 2013, health-care reform requires insurance plans to cover breastfeeding supplies and consultants. Businesses with more than 50 employees must give employees a clean place (not a bathroom) to pump.

The West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance is conducting breastfeeding trainings for hospitals around the state. The state Bureau of Public Health funded an obesity/diabetes/breastfeeding conference in early 2012.

And most West Virginia hospitals are still sending new moms home with bags of formula.

"The encouraging thing is, people are starting to look at what's happening with babies, in relation to obesity and chronic disease," Jeffrey said. "We'll just keep moving forward."

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