

Special Report

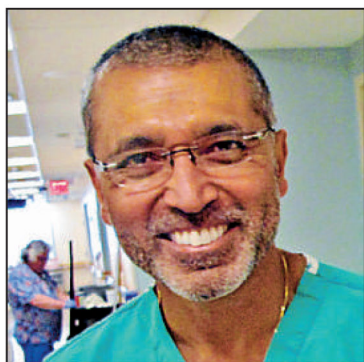
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Editorial, 2 Commentary, 3



"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



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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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A Dozen Breastfeeding Tips for First Days

- Hold the baby skin-to-skin and nurse within an hour of birth and often thereafter. Skin-to-skin stimulates mom's milk, soothes the baby and lowers mom's blood pressure.

- The first day, babies need to be held a lot, but may eat very little.

- At birth, the average baby's stomach holds only a teaspoon and a half. At first, breastfed babies eat small amounts every hour or so.

- For the first few days, mom's breasts produce small amounts of colostrum, a concentrated yellowish milk full of nutrients, antibodies and immunities. It is important for the baby to have it, even if you syringe or spoon it in. It may be just drops at times.

- A baby's stomach is immature at birth, full of tiny holes. Colostrum (early milk) works like a primer, sealing the holes. For it to work most effectively, put nothing else in the baby's stomach, unless there is a medical reason to do so.

- A baby's stomach doubles in size within 3 days, then again within 10 days. At that point, it holds about two ounces.

- Mother's milk starts to look more white four or five days after birth.

- The more a mother nurses, the more milk she produces, and the faster her milk comes in.

- No formula can match immunities breastfeeding gives babies: lower risk of obesity, pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma, throat, ear and lung infections, diabetes, intestinal infections, leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome. Mom gets extra protection against breast and ovarian cancer.

- To let mom's milk do its best job, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and American Dietetic Association advise mothers to breastfeed, with no other food, at least six months, preferably a year, unless there is a medical problem. The formula industry advises six months.

- In the first days, bottle nipples or pacifiers can make breastfeeding harder because they are different in feel from the breast and can cause "nipple confusion."

- Avoid bright lights. They can cause new babies to fuss and resist nursing.

- If the baby does not "latch," don't give up. Try skin-to-skin. Shift baby in position and angle. Ask a lactation consultant for help. Look for helpful YouTube videos. Hang in.

SOURCES: Jenny Morris and Brenda Young, certified lactation specialists, Women Infants and Children's Program; Dr. Jamie Jeffrey, director Children's Medicine Clinic, CAMC

JENNY

FROM PAGE 1E

bronchitis, pneumonia, leukemia, asthma, allergies, intestinal diseases, diabetes and sudden infant death syndrome, among other things, research since 1990 shows.

- Bottle-fed babies are more likely to become obese children, research shows, which puts them at higher risk of diabetes and heart disease.

- West Virginia has the nation's third-lowest rate of mothers who breastfeed and one of the nation's highest obesity and chronic disease rates.

- Mothers who breastfeed are at lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer and, later, rheumatoid arthritis.

The American Medical Association and an array of medical associations — even the formula industry — now recommend mothers breastfeed only for six months at least.

"But young mothers pay more attention to their doctor, grandma or friends than they do to the AMA," Morris said.

Each week, she visits breastfeeding moms at CAMC and Thomas Memorial to help them resolve dilemmas that might make them quit.

Contrary to popular myth, "mothers often aren't sure what to do," she said. The first few weeks, a lot give up if someone doesn't help, she said. "There are lots of tricks to it."

She doesn't try to change the minds of women who have decided to bottle-feed. "I concentrate on mothers who say they want to breastfeed or aren't sure."

If a breastfeeding mom is in pain after a C-section or if the baby won't latch, Morris helps shift the baby around to find positions that work. If a mom

worries because she doesn't have much milk at first, Morris reassures her that's normal. "You'll have more milk in a few days after your baby's stomach grows," she says. "The more you nurse, the faster it comes in."

Only 55 percent of West Virginia moms now start off breastfeeding, compared to 77 percent nationally. Only 20 percent make it to six months, compared with 47 percent nationally.

"The numbers are growing," Morris says. Nine years ago, it was only one in six. Now it's one in five. "We're talking about changing a culture, not exactly easy," she said.

Ten other southeastern states also have low numbers, the same states that have the highest obesity and chronic disease rates.

Bottle-feeding has been entrenched since the 1940s, Morris said, "thanks in part to advertising by the formula industry." People have the idea that if you breastfeed, you're saying you're too poor to buy formula, she said. "Then there's the fact that breasts are seen as sexual."

About 5 percent of moms can't breastfeed for medical reasons, and "drug-addicted moms should not," she said. "Otherwise, it's nature's gift, stronger than a lot of vaccines."

Higher-income and more-educated moms are more likely to breastfeed, she noted. They're more likely to have jobs that let them pump their milk on the job. "A lot of WIC moms are working moms with low salaries," she said. "Their babies deserve these immunities too."

'Hang in there'

On a recent September day, the first baby Morris visited was fussing, refusing to feed. She suggested the parents turn out the overhead light. The baby quit fussing and showed

interest in eating.

In another room, a mom said her baby sometimes wouldn't latch. Morris gently helped her hold her baby less tightly so he could swallow easily. "Try again after he settles down," she said. "Let him lie skin-to-skin. It will calm him and stimulate your milk."

"Each baby's different," she said. "It may be frustrating and exhausting till you establish a routine. Hang in. It will be worth it."

A grandmotherly cheerleader, Morris encourages at least six months of mom's milk only, but supports whatever the mother decides to do. "The first weeks are toughest," she keeps saying. "At first, a baby's stomach only holds a teaspoon and a half, so he'll eat often," she says. "Hold your ground if Grandma's standing there with a two-ounce bottle of formula, saying, 'That baby's starving! He shouldn't eat that often! Feed him this bottle!'"

"Bottle-fed babies' stomachs can be stretched," she tells mothers. "The person holding the bottle decides how much the baby takes in. Breast-fed babies quit when they've had enough." One study found the average bottle-fed baby takes in 30,000 more calories than a breastfed baby by eight months. "We're talking about the beginning of obesity," Morris said.

In almost every room, she talks about colostrum. Moms produce it the first few days. "It's very concentrated milk, full of nu-

trients and antibodies," she said.

A baby's gut is immature at birth, full of little holes, she says. "The colostrum acts like primer. It seals the gut, and transfers immunities to the baby. You want your baby to have it, even if you have to spoon or syringe it in."

"Sometimes you'll only produce a few drops at first," she said. "That's normal."

"Really?" one mom said. "I thought something was wrong with me."

Morris breastfed her three children. "My first two were easy, but the third taught me how hard it can be at first. But none has ever been sick much, so it worked."

On her way out, Morris stopped by Beth Hedrick's office. The obstetrics director had good news. In July, Thomas started training nursing staff in ways to promote breastfeeding. The hospital's breastfeeding rate went 10 percent in a month. "It's working," she said.

Thomas has one coach on staff. "I'd like another," she said.

Dr. Patel came strolling down the hall. "That talk takes three minutes," he said, "but if the mother decides to breastfeed, it's lifelong benefits for the child." Morris smiled broadly.

Before she left, she checked in with a mom whose baby hadn't been latching. The baby was nursing comfortably.

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