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FLORIDA HEALTH PROMOTES BREASTFEEDING DURING WORLD BREASTFEEDING MONTH

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Ocala, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County is highlighting the importance of breastfeeding during National Breastfeeding Month. Breastfeeding plays a critical role in healthy development from the very beginning of a child’s life.

“Healthy babies are the future of Marion County, and breastfeeding is by far the healthiest option for them,” said Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Officer Erin Hess. “We want to support breastfeeding moms and help local businesses become more breastfeeding-friendly.”

Earlier this year, the department launched the Florida Healthy Babies initiative and has invested nearly two million dollars in helping hospitals around the state promote “Baby Steps to Baby Friendly” in order to support mothers in practicing exclusive breastfeeding for their infants. Breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

As part of the department’s Florida Health Babies efforts in Marion county, health department staff held a community meeting at the College of Central Florida in June to discuss the challenges Marion County mothers face, and possible steps to help meet those challenges.

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, mothers need supportive maternity leave policies, flexible work hours, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply.

Call the Marion County WIC program at 352-622-1161 for local program and eligibility information. The department’s Healthy Start program also provides breastfeeding education and support. Call 352-629-0137, ext. 2275 for details.

For more information about the Florida WIC program call 1-800-342-3556 or visit www.FloridaWIC.org. To learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding visit www.Illi.org; or www.flbreastfeeding.org.

For more information about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly visit the Florida Healthiest Weight website.

For resources on breastfeeding and printouts for working moms, visit www.healthiestweightflorida.com/activities/breastfeeding.html.

About Healthiest Weight Florida

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. To learn more about how to be active and make nutritious food choices visit www.healthiestweightflorida.com.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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