



Breastfeeding Duration Increases

"In December 2010, 75% of women initiated breastfeeding in the Otter Tail County WIC Program. Today it has risen to 83%. In addition to the rise related to increased support and encouragement, it has increased because of the ripple effect. When women in the community have a successful breastfeeding experience, they are more likely to encourage other women to breastfeed."

Peggy Talsness
Otter Tail County WIC
Certified Lactation Consultant



Lactation Rooms in Worksites

Breastfeeding Rates increase as Golden Start and PartnerSHIP 4 Health work together

There is no better time to start a lifetime of good health than with a newborn. And the superior nutrient for the first year of life is breast milk.

According to the U.S. Department of Health breast milk is rich in nutrients and babies who are breastfed have a lower risk of ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory infections, asthma, obesity and diabetes. Breastfeeding lowers mom's chance of diabetes, breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

In order to support breast feeding, counties and hospitals in the West Central region of Minnesota teamed up to form the *Golden Start* Breastfeeding Initiative. The words *Golden Start* reflect the fact that colostrum, the first milk produced, is referred to as "liquid gold" due to both its color and its rich nutrients.

With the help of PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H), a local public health collaborative in Clay, Wilkin, Becker and Otter Tail counties, the *Golden Start* Initiative has been able to offer resources and assistance that have in turn increased the duration that women breastfeed. Leslie Anderson, RN, PS4H *Golden Start* Initiative staff member coordinates the lactation work in the four counties within health care, worksite, and daycare settings.

In the health care setting, the *Golden Start* Initiative offered training regarding evidence-based breastfeeding practice to nursing staff in hospitals, clinics, and public health departments.

Public health nurses who attended the *Golden Start* training are utilizing their increased skills to assist clients in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program and the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) Program.

WIC clients are provided information during pregnancy and encouraged to commit to exclusive breastfeeding for at least the first four weeks following the birth of the baby. The Nurse Family Partnership Program provides breastfeeding education to pregnant women as well as follow-up support after the baby's birth. "Mom's Milk Memos," one page handouts that were created to plant seeds of information and support along the way, are given to clients throughout pregnancy and the breastfeeding experience.

The initial outcomes related to the *Golden Start* Initiative in the Otter Tail County and Becker County Nurse Family Partnership revealed that breastfeeding duration increased from 14.8 weeks in 2010 to 19.2 weeks in 2012. According to Anderson, "We contribute this increase to *Golden Start* working with PS4H, the NFP Program and the WIC Program."

The *Golden Start* Initiative also promotes breastfeeding in worksite settings by serving as a resource to individual worksites as well as the PS4H worksite wellness collaborative members. Through this technical assistance many improvements were made to promote breastfeeding in the worksite. In the four counties a total of fourteen new lactation rooms have been added that are now providing clean, private environments for women to pump and store their breast milk. Additionally, under the guidance of PS4H worksite wellness staff, worksites have strengthened their worksite wellness policies to include lactation support.

Marion Kershner, Otter Tail County Family Health Nursing Supervisor, has observed that "PS4H is working to change the culture of worksites to make breastfeeding equally as important as exercise and healthy eating. It is vital to the health of both mother and baby." PS4H continues to work with health care and worksite settings to increase the number of lactation rooms available.

Besides health care and worksite settings, daycare settings are also impacted by the *Golden Start* Initiative. The goal here is to increase the number of settings that understand the needs of the breastfeeding mom and baby and provide a friendly breastfeeding environment. In this manner moms will have increased access to environments supportive of breastfeeding.

Peggy Talsness, Otter Tail County WIC and Certified Lactation Consultant said, "It started with a simple idea about enhancing breastfeeding. But now the *Golden Start* Initiative, with the help of PS4H, has helped so many babies start their lives in the healthiest way possible. Optimal health begins when moms provide a *Golden Start*."

Resources: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/why-breastfeeding-is-important/index.html>

