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**For Immediate Release**

**Providing Information and Inspiration**  
*National Breastfeeding Month helps promote mom-baby benefits*

The benefits of breastfeeding last a lifetime. As a result, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) and the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) are promoting their breastfeeding support services throughout the month of August: National Breastfeeding Month.

Did you know that:

- 85% of mothers want to breastfeed,
- 80% begin breastfeeding their baby, but only
- 30% reach their breastfeeding goals without support?

“Breastfeeding is something our bodies are meant to do, and breast milk is the best food to help babies grow and develop,” says Danica Howard, an HDNW International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant. “There’s so much more to breastfeeding than nutrition. There are key health benefits for both mom and baby.”

**Watch HDNW International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant Danica Howard discuss the importance and benefits of breastfeeding on The Four, a 9&10 News lifestyle show, with host Eric Brazeal at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 9.**

In addition to helping the baby build a strong immune system, breastfeeding lowers the baby’s risk for short- and long-term illnesses such as asthma, childhood obesity, type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS. Breast milk also contains substances that naturally soothe the baby, and breast milk changes to meet the baby’s nutritional needs as they grow.

There are also health benefits for mom during this vulnerable time. Breastfeeding fosters a bond and reduces the mother’s risk of ovarian and breast cancers. It’s also a natural way to lose some of the baby weight, as it burns 500-600 calories a day.

While breastfeeding is natural, it often comes with many questions and challenges. HDNW provides extensive support programs for mothers as they breastfeed. How that support is offered is up to the mothers. For example, breastfeeding counselors can visit them in the hospital, in the health department clinics or at home. They can answer questions over the phone or by text.

“We’re here to help moms with whatever they need,” says Melissa Hahn, HDNW Family Health Director. “Early in pregnancy, mothers set goals about breastfeeding, whether it’s to breastfeed for a month, the recommended six months or a year. We provide the support they need to meet their goals by answering questions, providing information, and even offering assurance. Whatever they need.”

Throughout August and early September, the [U.S. Breastfeeding Committee](#) has designated National weekly observances with themes and information for all moms. They are:

*HDNW is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.*



Proud member of the [Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance](#): 7 local health departments advocating for public health.

Aug. 1-7 World Breastfeeding Week

Aug. 8-14 Indigenous Milk Medicine Week

Aug. 15-21 Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week

Aug. 25-31 Black Breastfeeding Week

Sept. 5-11 Semana de La Lactancia Latina

To learn more about the history of breastfeeding and how it's making a cultural comeback, watch this four-minute video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zhx-R6p1xAQ>.

To learn more about HDNW's breastfeeding support programs, call us locally at 800-432-4121 or go to <https://www.nwhealth.org/bfss.html>.

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