

# Surgeon General Issues for Breastfeeding Report

Everyone from employers to husbands should help new mothers overcome obstacles to breastfeeding, according to a new report from the U.S. Surgeon General.

The "Call to Action" identifies ways that the people around new mothers can help them to stick with breastfeeding. For



**Women shouldn't be made to feel guilty if they choose not to breastfeed.**

DR. BENJAMIN

example, clinicians can do their part by getting trained to care for breastfeeding mothers and babies, and by ensuring that mothers receive proper advice on how to breastfeed.

"Many barriers exist for mothers who want to breastfeed," Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, the U.S. Surgeon General, said

in a statement. "They shouldn't have to go it alone. Whether you're a clinician, a family member, a friend, or an employer, you can play an important part in helping mothers who want to breastfeed."

About 75% of mothers breastfeed their babies initially, but that number falls to 43% at the end of 6 months, according to 2010 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number of women who exclusively breastfeed their babies at the end of 6 months is even lower, at 13%.

But Dr. Benjamin said that breastfeeding is a personal decision and women shouldn't be made to feel guilty if they choose not to breastfeed.

The report details a number of steps that can help support new mothers in their decision to choose and continue breastfeeding:

- ▶ Organizations can offer breastfeeding classes that target not just pregnant women and new mothers, but also fathers and grandmothers.
- ▶ Physicians can encourage breastfeeding by not handing out notepads and growth

charts with formula company logos on them. Displaying products from the formula companies can imply to patients that physicians favor formula feeding over breastfeeding, according to the report.

▶ Providers of undergraduate and graduate medical education can incorporate

content on breastfeeding because health professionals in all specialties encounter breastfeeding mothers and children.

▶ Employers can include lactation support as part of their basic employee benefits package.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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