



# WIC Breastfeeding Program Benefits Mothers, Infants and Employers

Health departments in Kansas are distributing single user electric breast pumps to eligible breastfeeding mothers as part of a WIC program to encourage participants to extend breastfeeding duration. Participants of the WIC program must be WIC eligible, commit to serving only breast milk to the infant in the first year, be separated from the infant at least four hours per day during four days of the week, and use a hospital grade electric breast pump for one month prior to receiving a single user pump.

Local Kansas WIC programs have several multi-use breast pumps that they loan out on a regular basis. Single user pumps are especially convenient and versatile for WIC eligible working moms. The pump comes equipped with an easy-to-carry shoulder bag with strap and has a chilled storage place to keep the pumped milk.

Mothers who commit to breastfeeding exclusively are eligible to receive additional WIC foods since they do not receive any formula from WIC. These foods include all of the foods received during pregnancy plus extra foods, such as additional cheese, carrots and canned fish. Beginning August 1, 2009 all WIC clients will receive whole grains, fruits and vegetables and breastfeeding mothers will receive additional benefits in the monthly food package.

The breastfeeding initiation in Kansas has steadily increased to 76.1 percent of moms who breastfeed. Although more than 70 percent of women initiate breastfeeding, many do not continue, often because they have decided to return to work. The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Mother and Child Health Coalition, and Healthy Babies Program/Northeast Wichita Healthy Start Initiative and the Sedgwick County Health Department wrote The Business Case for Breastfeeding, a grant to improve employer support of breastfeeding moms.

Employers who provide a supportive environment to help women continue breastfeeding enjoy many proven benefits that affect the bottom line. These include: lower health care costs, lower turnover rates, lower absenteeism rates, higher employee productivity and morale, and positive public relations in the community as a “family friendly” business.

A major goal of the WIC program is to improve the nutritional status of infants. Breastfeeding provides superior nutrition for infants and can provide a measure of protection against most infections and allergic disorders. Breastfeeding also strengthens the nurturing relationship between a mother and her child, promoting stronger family bonds and positive self-esteem for mothers. Research suggests it may also provide short and long-term health benefits to the nursing mother and it also has the potential to decrease health care costs for infants.

For more information go to: <http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/>.