

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement

AUGUST IS NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH

[National Breastfeeding Month](#) was founded by the [United States Breastfeeding Committee](#) in 2011 to advocate and promote breastfeeding and human milk feeding. This year, the theme for National Breastfeeding Month is *This is Our Why*. Everyone has their own "why": why they care, why they work so hard, why they are passionate, and why they don't give up! This theme was developed to shine a light on the many reasons that communities individually and collectively strive to increase support for breastfeeding and human milk feeding.

In celebration, there are several weekly observances throughout the month to promote the unique chest/breastfeeding challenges that communities encounter with the goal of knowledge retention and advocacy. Join the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) in celebrating National Breastfeeding Month in August and throughout the year!

Week One: [World Breastfeeding Week](#) (August 1st – 7th) is dedicated to the promotion of breastfeeding and improving the health of babies around the world.

The theme for the 2023 World Breastfeeding Week is Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a Difference for Working Parents. One of the ways in which working parents are now being supported is through the two legislations passed in 2023: the [PUMP Act](#) and the [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act](#). Both legislative acts were brought forth by the United States Breastfeeding Committee in a nearly 10-year campaign to strengthen support for breastfeeding parents in the workplace.



Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement



Week Two: [Indigenous Milk Medicine Week](#)

(August 8th – 14th) is a celebration of the healing power and cultural significance of Indigenous breastfeeding.

The theme for the 2023 Indigenous Milk Medicine Week is ***From the Stars to a Sustainable Future***. This theme connects milk medicine to Mother Earth and the elements of water, land, fire, and air. It is culturally significant for Indigenous peoples to use breastfeeding to promote health, community, environment, and cultural traditions that contribute to a sustainable future.

Week Three: [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander \(AANHPI\) Breastfeeding Week](#) (August 15th – August 21st) is dedicated to the promotion of breastfeeding in the AANHPI community. The theme for 2023 is Telling Our Stories: Elevating Our Voices.



This theme acknowledges that many breastfeeding families across AANHPI communities are often invisible and labeled as a singular, monolithic group. In an informative [article](#) written by Tonya Lang, the co-founder of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Lactation Collaborative of California and a member of the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee's AANHPI Caucus, described the importance of AANHPI Breastfeeding Week, as well as how to celebrate and honor AANHPI communities. Additionally, the Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander (ASAP!) Breastfeeding Taskforce also created a beautiful culturally responsive prenatal toolkit for Chinese and Vietnamese families. To view the toolkits, visit Recommendation 6 resources in the [Continuity of Care in Breastfeeding Support: A Blueprint for Communities Resource Library](#).

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement



**BLACK
BREASTFEEDING
WEEK**

Week Four: Black Breastfeeding Week (August 25th –31st) is dedicated to highlighting that in the United States, Black infants have the highest infant death rates compared to other races and ethnicities.

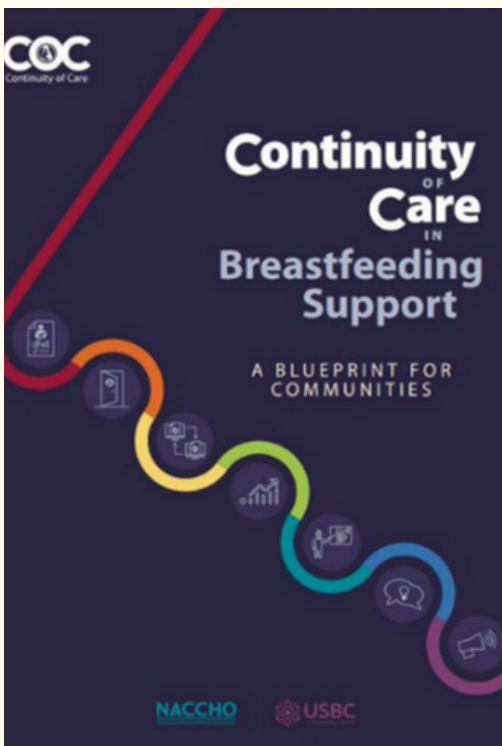
Their deaths are attributed to infants being born too early, too small, or too sick, leading to higher susceptibility to viruses, infections, and more. Thus, Black Breastfeeding Week encourages breastfeeding as an appropriate intervention that improves the overall health of infants and can support closing the racial disparity gap in breastfeeding rates. This week also serves as an encouraging reminder for professionals in the medical field to be intentional in their support of Black lactating mothers and birthing persons throughout the stages of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care.

Week Five: Semana de la Lactancia Latina (September 5th –11th) is dedicated to sharing stories, uplifting voices, coming together to celebrate culture and resilience, and bringing awareness to the barriers to breastfeeding that are unique to the Latina/o/x culture. It is through Semana de la Lactancia Latina that communities hear touching recounts of personal breastfeeding experiences, connect to feel a sense of belonging, are encouraged to overcome challenges and obstacles, and are guided to help and influence policymakers to understand the needs and asks of Latina/o/x communities.



Continuity of Care in Breastfeeding Support

The National Association for County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) recognizes National Breastfeeding Month as an opportunity to honor and celebrate the remarkable journey of breastfeeding parents. Breastfeeding offers optimal nutrition benefits, enhances the health of both infants and breastfeeding parents, and promotes bonding between the breastfeeding parent and the child. NACCHO understands the value of supportive policies, education, access to lactation services, and resources that empower parents throughout their breastfeeding journey.



To ensure that optimal feeding for infants and toddlers is the easy and default choice for every family across the country, NACCHO and NHSA partner with local health departments and community-based organizations across the country to promote, protect, and support continuity of care in breastfeeding.

NACCHO's [Chest/ Breastfeeding webpage](#) displays links to resources, including the [Continuity of Care in Breastfeeding Support: A Blueprint for Communities](#) and the [Every Step of the Way Through The 1,000 Days](#) webinar series. Additionally, the CoC Blueprint website has a [Resource Library](#), that hosts grantee success stories, journal articles, policy templates, social media toolkits, community assessment examples, reports, and more.

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement

NACCHO supports the NHSA's mission to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality through projects that support the availability and accessibility of high-quality lactation support services. As research continues to reinforce, breastfeeding has been associated with reduced infant mortality.

A newly published study released by NACCHO grantee, the Cincinnati Children's Medical Center, titled [Associations Between Breastfeeding and Post-perinatal Infant Deaths in the U.S.](#), was conducted by lead investigator Julie Ware, MD, MPH. Dr. Ware found that "there is clear evidence that breastfeeding confers a protective benefit during the first year of life and is strongly associated with reduced post-perinatal infant mortality across the USA". This study discovered that among nearly 10 million infants born in the United States between 2016 and 2018, breastfed babies were 33% less likely to die during the post-perinatal period (day 7–364) than infants who were not breastfed.



These findings support the need and opportunity for breastfeeding promotion, protection, and support to be included as a key component in comprehensive infant mortality reduction initiatives in regions and states across the US.

Breastfeeding is a Family Affair: Fatherhood and Partner Involvement in Chest/Breastfeeding



Fathers and partners can play critical and life-saving roles for both the breastfeeding parent and the child throughout pregnancy and during the post-partum period.

Studies have found that women with partners who are more involved throughout the pregnancy are more likely to access prenatal care in the first trimester, have lower maternal depression, reduce cigarette smoking, and to initiate breastfeeding (Yogman & Garfield, 2016). The American Academy of Pediatrics released a [study](#) that reflected that out of 250 respondents in the study, Only 63.4% reported their infant was breastfed at eight weeks. Even more, breastfeeding at eight weeks was more likely to be reported when fathers had input on the mother's decision to breastfeed, and when fathers held a collegiate degree (Parker et al., 2023).

Evidence reports that father and partner involvement during pregnancy increases overall involvement (e.g., time spent with the infant) and increases ongoing involvement (e.g., caregiving, financial contribution). The result of fathers and partners staying involved is reduced parental substance abuse, improvements to the father's self-confidence and self-image, and parental happiness. Father involvement not only improves cognitive, emotional, and social-behavior health outcomes for children; it also reduces infant mortality (Allport et al., 2018).

NHSA understands the important role that fathers play in improving maternal and child health outcomes. NHSA's fatherhood/male involvement initiative, Where Dads Matter, evolved as Healthy Start projects consistently expressed a need for Healthy Start sites to become more father and partner-inclusive.

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement

NHSA has a comprehensive perspective of fatherhood that consists of:

- Providing a historical foundation on the role of men and fathers, and why their involvement in their family matters.
- Examining the impact of father involvement on maternal health and birth outcomes to identify opportunities to enhance and strengthen projects.
- Identifying strategies to strengthen family resilience by viewing father involvement as a protective factor.
- Creating opportunities for men to engage in their own health, as well as their child's health before, during, after, and beyond pregnancy.



As the membership organization for the 101 federally-funded Healthy Start programs, NHSA offers support, mentorship, training, and tools to continually build the capacity of the Healthy Start programs. NHSA's [Fatherhood Advocacy toolkit](#) was created in partnership with Fatherhood Practitioners across the NHSA membership network and subject matter experts. The objective of the toolkit is to provide a valuable resource for Fatherhood Practitioners and Colleagues as they serve and educate fathers in their communities to become advocates for the health and well-being of their partner and their children.

This toolkit provides fathers with comprehensive information on various stages of pregnancy and childbirth, empowering them to ask relevant questions when engaging with healthcare providers throughout the perinatal period. The toolkit includes information on establishing paternity, navigating the stress of fatherhood, maternal health, nutrition during pregnancy, pregnancy complications and warning signs, breastfeeding, stages of labor, postpartum care, and early childhood development.

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement

National Healthy Start Project Spotlights

The National Healthy Start Association continuously elevates the voices of families along their journey of parenting. Here are just a few quotes from Healthy Start participants from across the country regarding their experiences with breastfeeding.

“In my culture from where I come from, that’s what you do to feed your baby so that they are healthy, smart, strong, and avoid diseases.”

“I’m afraid not to breastfeed, I don’t want to worry about finding formula.”

“I chose to breastfeed because I know it is best for my child and I can make it naturally and readily available as needed.”

“I chose to breastfeed because breastmilk is the best milk. I wanted the healthiest and most natural option for my baby, as well as building a beautiful bond with my baby.”

“I became interested in breastfeeding when I began working with WIC. Everything that was being taught I wanted to try with my babies. I wanted to give them the best nutrition possible. What I most love is our bond and how we connect day or night! Yes, it’s tiring!! But totally worth it. I know my baby is getting the best milk! Thanks to mama.”

“I truly supported the breastfeeding of our two girls by my wife. It was reinforced by the nurse at the hospital who share the benefits with us. I believe having the immunity because the antibodies in the breast milk was paramount to our girls getting through and surviving 4 different episodes of COVID in our household.”

Breastfeeding, Nutrition, and Partner Involvement

Resources

- **NACCHO** offers a [Continuity of Care in Breastfeeding Support Resource Guide](http://www.breastfeedingcontinuityofcare.org/coclibrary) to support professionals with a variety of learning and lactation navigation opportunities. Topics include the CoC Blueprint; the #EveryStepoftheWay Through the First 1,000 Days webinar series; Webinar resource guides; Community Assessment templates; recordings of technical assistance calls with CDC grantees; and Grantee Spotlights. For more information and resources, please visit our website at <http://www.breastfeedingcontinuityofcare.org/coclibrary>
- **NHSA** offers a comprehensive [Breastfeeding Resource Guide](http://www.nationalhealthystart.org) to support families. It includes a variety of topics related to breastfeeding that support and educate pregnant women and mothers, guiding them as they make informed infant-feeding decisions. Topics include Breastfeeding Benefits; Lactation Support; Supporting Your Partner; Pumping, Milk Handling; Storage and Traveling; Breastfeeding in the Workplace; Breastfeeding Initiatives; Breastfeeding and Medication Use; and Breastfeeding Toolkits and Factsheets. For more information on other toolkits and resources, please visit our website at www.nationalhealthystart.org
- [Workshop on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence for Maternal Health Care Webinar](#)
- [Black Maternal Health Incubator Hub \(BMH-IH\) Fall 2023 Pilot Cohort](#)
- [Postpartum Toolkit: Improving Care for Moms through Clinic and Community Engagement](#)

Share with Communities

- [Pregnant and Postpartum Workers: Know Your Rights!](#)
- [Breastfeeding Survival Guide for the First Two Weeks](#)

Activities

- [Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding in all Policies: Reframing the Narrative](#)
- [A National Survey of OBGYNs' Experiences After Dobbs | KFF](#)
- [Using A Change Framework to Design Systems that Effectively Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives and Promote Racial Justice](#)
- [Fathers, Breastfeeding, and Infant Sleep Practices: Findings From a State-Representative Survey](#)

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Follow NHSA on all our social media platforms. We are now on Threads!

<https://linkin.bio/nathealthystart>

References

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