



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 1-23-09**

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### **Special to the Gratiot County Herald**

## **When it comes to the health of your baby, the breast is best**

STANTON~ Experts agree that exclusive breastfeeding gives babies the very best possible start in life. Breast milk is packed with nutrients and antibodies to protect against illness, and is in essence, nature's perfect food.

Breast milk is so beneficial to newborn babies that mothers are highly encouraged to breastfeed exclusively (no other foods or drinks) until six months of age and continue breastfeeding when other foods have been introduced after six months of age. Breastfeeding after six months gives babies powerful protection from bacteria and viruses, adequate nutrition, and feelings of comfort and security.

Studies show that babies gain many benefits from breastfeeding, such as:

- Protection from bacterial and viral infections.
- Decreased chance of developing obesity.
- Fewer episodes of diarrhea during infancy.
- Reduction in ear infections by up to 50 percent and serious lower respiratory track infections by 72 percent.
- Lower risk of developing Type I and Type II Diabetes, asthma, lymphoma and childhood leukemia.
- Fewer cases of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Benefits of breastfeeding extend to the mother as well. Those benefits include:

- Losing pregnancy pounds more quickly (nursing burns extra calories).
- Lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
- Lower risk of developing type II diabetes.
- Lower risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis after menopause.
- Time savings (no bottles to prepare or sterilize).
- Money savings (no need to buy formula).

"Breastfeeding makes such a significant contribution to the health, development and emotional well-being of children," said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) "One simply can't ignore the fact that when it comes to feeding newborns the breast really is best."

For more information contact Angie Martin, MMDHD Registered Dietician at 989-875-1011 or Judy Wernert, MMDHD Public Health Nurse at 989-227-3119.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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