



# Heartland Health Region

*Building a region of healthy people and healthy communities!*

**HealthLine**  
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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### **National World Breastfeeding Week – October 1-7, 2009 - “Breastfeeding, It Saves Lives!”**

Join Heartland Health Region in celebrating World Breastfeeding Week from October 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> 2009. The 2009 theme draws attention to the vital role that breastfeeding plays in emergencies.

This week is about:

- Protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding.
- Promoting the benefits of breastfeeding for both baby and mother.
- Informing mothers, communities, health professionals, governments, aid agencies, donors, and the media on how they can support breastfeeding before and during an emergency.

Breastfeeding is the ideal food source for babies. Breast milk provides the perfect nutrition; it is convenient, portable, always served at the right temperature, and comes in a sanitary package.

Breastfeeding aids infant growth and development and improves health. Health benefits include fewer doctor visits and preventing chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity. Breast milk is also an antiviral and immune system booster for infants. For mothers, breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer and decreases the risk of developing osteoporosis and arthritis.

Emergencies can happen anywhere. Emergencies do not distinguish between the developed and undeveloped country. Emergencies destroy the “normal”. Access to safe water sources are often compromised making it impossible to prepare safe formula. You might lose your power and not be able to clean and sterilize bottles, nipples, or other infant feeding equipment. Restrictions on travel may prevent you from getting infant feeding supplies. Infants are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, illness, and death in these situations.

Safe, reliable, and accessible feeding practices for infants are also important to highlight with the pending flu season. Breastfeeding is an emergency preparedness plan; the safest and best way to feed an infant. Breastfeeding can provide protection to infants against flu complications, such as diarrhea and dehydration. Mother’s should follow recommended hygiene practices and continue to breastfeed.

All over the world and whatever the emergency – flu, flood, snowstorm, tornado, fire, or conflict - the story is the same: breastfeeding is a lifeline and shield that protects infants.

Throughout the year, mothers delivering babies in Heartland Health Region Hospitals, and who choose to breastfeed, receive a complementary door hanger in support of Breastfeeding. These door hangers help mothers show that important work is in progress and may be used any place where a mother requires quiet time to breastfeed. Please knock and respect their choice to breastfeed!

Babies born between September 24<sup>th</sup> and October 14<sup>th</sup> 2009, and who are exclusively breastfed, will receive a World Breastfeeding Week promotional T-shirt at their postnatal home visit with the public health nurse.

Breastfeeding is a vital emergency response. For more information about World Breastfeeding Week, see <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>

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