



MEDIA RELEASE

August 2010

Dietitians urge new mums to breastfeed – for their own health

Feeding infants with breast milk has been shown to improve baby health and even IQ. But according to dietitians, many new mums are unaware that breastfeeding also lowers their own risk of cancer and heart disease – two of the biggest killers among Australian women.

To mark World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August) Australia's peak nutrition body, the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), is reinforcing to new mums the importance of breastfeeding – for their own health.

According to DAA CEO Claire Hewat, the benefits of breastfeeding stay with mothers for years to come. But despite this, only 56 per cent of infants are still fully breastfed at three months¹.

'Mums who breastfeed have a lower risk of premenopausal breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis. Breastfeeding also boosts the immune system, speeds up recovery after child birth and helps the mother return to her pre-pregnancy weight,' said Ms Hewat.

Health authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding to six months of age and continued breastfeeding until at least 12 months, as solids are being introduced².

According to Accredited Practising Dietitian Kate Di Prima, many Australian women struggle to get the support they need to continue breastfeeding. And a common concern is confusion over what to eat while breastfeeding.

'New mums don't need to eat a lot of extra food or 'special' foods to make breast milk. But a healthy diet will help produce breast milk with the right balance of energy, protein, and vitamins – and help mums feel better and have more energy,' said Ms Di Prima.

She said breastfeeding women need plenty of vegetables, fruits, and wholegrain breads and cereals, and moderate amounts of reduced-fat dairy foods and lean meat (or alternatives, like legumes).

ENDS

**For further information or to organise an interview contact Holly Smith,
Dietitians Association of Australia on 0409 662 920.**

Note to Editors: The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit www.daa.asn.au

Background

- World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is an initiative of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, held every year from 1-7 August. The 2010 campaign focuses on 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding':
www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org
- By one week old only 80 per cent of infants are fully breastfed, and this figure drops to 56 per cent at three months and only 14 per cent at six months. Around 56 per cent of babies are either fully or partially breastfed at six months of age and less than one in three (30 per cent) are still breastfed at 12 months¹. And women living in lower socioeconomic areas have lower rates of breastfeeding².
- To mark WBW, the Paediatric and Maternal Health Interest Group of the Dietitians Association of Australia has put together a fact sheet: 'Ten steps to healthy eating for breastfeeding women'. Please see this attached.

¹ Australian Institute of Family Studies. Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (2008). Available at:
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/pubs/ar/ar200607/breastfeeding.html>

² The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond.