



STATE OF MARYLAND

# *DHMH PRESS RELEASE*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **DHMH Encourages Working Mothers To Breastfeed Their Babies** *Teleconference to be held on August 3*

BALTIMORE, MD (July 31, 2007) — In conjunction with the August recognition of Breastfeeding Awareness Month, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) will host a breastfeeding teleconference entitled "Breastfeeding Grand Rounds- Maternal Depression and Breastfeeding" on Friday, August 3 from Noon to 2:30 p.m. at the DHMH headquarters at 201 West Preston Street in Baltimore.

The free teleconference will be held in Lobby Conference Room L-3 and is open to the public. A breastfeeding information display will be featured throughout the month of August at the same location.

DHMH reminds Maryland residents that breastfeeding is the healthiest feeding choice for mothers and babies.

Mother's milk is considered the 'gold standard' for infant nutrition, yet only 41 percent of Maryland's new mothers are still breastfeeding their babies at six months, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Most health experts, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months, and that breastfeeding continue along with complementary foods for the remainder of the first year. Health benefits of breastfeeding include a lowered risk of breast and ovarian cancer for mothers, and less illness and infections for infants.

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“Breast milk is called the ‘gold standard’ because it contains unique nutrients, disease-fighting antibodies and many other substances not found in any commercially prepared infant formula,” said DHMH Deputy Secretary Dr. Michelle A. Gourdine. “Simply put, no formula can compare with the nutritional advantages of breast milk.

“Seventy-five percent of new mothers in Maryland initiate breastfeeding when their babies are born,” Dr. Gourdine said, “but many of them give up after a few months, especially if they have to go back to work. This is unfortunate, because the health benefits of continued breastfeeding are tremendous for both mother and baby.”

So, given all the advantages, why do so many mothers stop breastfeeding prematurely? “It’s often hard to combine breastfeeding and full-time employment,” said Dr. Gourdine. “Breastfeeding mothers need adequate break time during the day to use a breast pump, as well as a clean and private place to do so. If these are not readily available, women are more inclined to give up breastfeeding when they return to work.”

This fall, a partnership of state agencies will seek to make breastfeeding easier for Maryland’s working mothers by gaining support from their employers.

In October, DHMH and the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) will launch the Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award for employers whose policies encourage new mothers to continue breastfeeding their babies after returning to work. Employers can earn the award by providing mothers with adequate break time and a private, quiet area to pump and store breast milk. A ‘Breastfeeding Friendly Toolkit’ will be available to employers who need guidance on how to make their workplace more accommodating to breastfeeding mothers.

More information about breastfeeding and the toolkit is available on the DHMH Web site at [www.marylandbreastfeeding.org](http://www.marylandbreastfeeding.org).

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