



## Greene County Public Health

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# Press Release

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## August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month

*Communities Can Work Together to Provide Support for Breastfeeding Families*

XENIA, OH – Officials with the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program at Greene County Public Health (GCPH) announces that August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month, and World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) will be celebrated Aug. 1-7 this year. Breastfeeding has many known health benefits for mother and baby and is widely accepted as an effective strategy to promote positive health outcomes for both mothers and their babies. Research suggests that breastfeeding is a key factor in reducing the risk of disease for both mothers and infants, including respiratory illness, ear infections, allergies, and some cancers. A woman's early experience with breastfeeding can affect whether and how long she continues to breastfeed, and providing support at every level can help reduce barriers to breastfeeding.

To help raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted have signed a proclamation naming August Ohio Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This year, Ohio will adopt the World Breastfeeding Week theme **“Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All.”** This theme focuses on survival, health, and wellbeing. It showcases the need to improve breastfeeding support to reduce inequalities that exist in our society with a special focus on breastfeeding in times of emergencies and crises.

Greene County Public Health, along with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding with the addition of appropriate complementary foods with the continuation of breastfeeding for two years or longer. Communities and related programs play a vital role in helping parents reach these breastfeeding recommendations by providing education and support at the most crucial times in the perinatal period.

The Ohio WIC program offers breastfeeding support to Ohio families by providing prenatal education as well as appointments with lactation professionals. One of the most important ways businesses and communities can support breastfeeding is to help parents feel comfortable nursing in public. Businesses can show their support by placing a universal sign for breastfeeding support in their windows and educate their staff about the acceptance of Ohio law (Section 3781.55 of the Ohio Revised Code), which allows breastfeeding in public. Businesses have access to The Ohio Workplace PLUS Toolkit, which can help with supporting their lactating employees and providing a private space (other than a bathroom) to pump. This will help increase employee retention and reduce medical costs. Childcare centers have access to training materials and can learn more about obtaining a breastfeeding friendly designation. These programs play an important role in supporting

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breastfeeding families by welcoming breastfeeding mothers and making sure staff members are trained to handle breast milk and follow mothers' feeding plans. Hospitals also can join the Ohio First Steps for Healthy Babies initiative as an indication that they are dedicated to supporting new mothers who choose to breastfeed. Learn more about all these initiatives and resources at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Breastfeeding>.

For more information about breastfeeding, call the GCPH WIC clinic at 937-374-5641, or the Ohio Statewide Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-888-588-3423.

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