



Breastfeeding Among Florida Women, 2000-2001

A mother's breast milk provides a wide range of health benefits to infants. Children who are breastfed have been shown to have enhanced immune responses to many infant infections and early childhood illnesses. Breastfeeding aids in maternal postpartum recovery. It also provides physical contact, warmth, and closeness, which help to create a special bond between a mother and her baby.

According to Florida PRAMS 2000 and 2001 survey data, the overall prevalence among new mothers in Florida of breastfeeding their infants was 76.1 percent. The prevalence among women in Florida of breastfeeding was:

- The highest among Hispanic women (87.1 percent), followed by non-Hispanic White women (76.8 percent); the lowest among non-Hispanic Black women (62.7 percent).
- Higher both among women between 25- and 34-years old (80.1 percent) and those age 35 and older (77.5 percent) than among women age 20 to 24 (72.9 percent); the lowest among women age 19 and younger (65.0 percent).
- The highest among women with more than a high school education (83.8 percent); 71.1 percent among those with a high school education, and 66.9 percent among women with less than a high school education.
- Higher as household incomes increased. In particular, 70.8 percent among women with annual household incomes of \$15,600 or less, 76.6 percent among those with incomes between \$15,601 and \$39,600, and 85.5 percent among women with household incomes over \$39,600.
- Lower among Medicaid recipients (67.8 percent) than among non-Medicaid recipients (82.1 percent).
- Higher among married women (82.3 percent) than among unmarried women (65.1 percent).
- Higher among first-time mothers (80.1 percent) than among those with previous live births (73.2 percent).
- Lower among women who gave birth to low birth weight infants (67.5 percent) than among those with normal birth weight infants (76.4 percent).
- Lower among women with unintended pregnancies (71.2 percent) than among those with intended pregnancies (80.3 percent).
- The highest among women who were told by hospital staff to breastfeed on demand (93.9 percent); the lowest among those who were not told to breastfeed on demand (46.7 percent).

This study shows that nearly one-fourth of new mothers do not breast feed their babies. Women in Florida who are less likely to breastfeed their babies are non-Hispanic Blacks, are age 19 or younger, are on Medicaid, are unmarried, have lower levels of education or income, have previous live births, have low birth weight infants, and/or have unintended pregnancies. The data underscore the association between being told by hospital staff to breastfeed on demand and breastfeeding initiation. These findings may assist healthcare providers and program planners in Florida to provide effective information for increasing the prevalence of breastfeeding among new mothers.

The Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is a random survey of recent mothers of live-born infants. It is designed to monitor the physical, economic, and social health of Florida mothers and newborns. PRAMS data are "weighted" so that the resulting estimates can be generalized to the entire state population. PRAMS data from 2000 and 2001 were combined to increase sample size and precision of estimates for this study.

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