



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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BREASTFEEDING: YOUR CHILD'S FIRST IMMUNIZATION

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health, Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children, Kaiser Permanente and Queen's Hospital will recognize the many benefits of breastfeeding at the Hawaii Breastfeeding Challenge happening on October 2, 2004. Mothers, mothers-to-be and their loved ones are encouraged to attend and participate in a global celebration aiming to set a world record for the most women breastfeeding at one time. The challenge begins at 10:30 a.m. at two sites, one on Oahu at the State Capital and the other at Hilo Hawaiian Hotel on the Big Island.

Hawaii's health care leaders advocate breastfeeding for the wide range of protective factors for the mother and the child. Dr. Linda Rosen, a pediatrician and Deputy Director of Health Resources said, "We want to focus efforts to get moms to breastfeed exclusively, for the first six-months. Breastfeeding is a newborn's first immunization, protecting the infant from infection during the first several months of life."

Mothers are also privy to the health benefits of breastfeeding. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health reports that breastfeeding helps women lose weight gained from their pregnancy, improves maternal health, and lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

Although breastfeeding research clearly shows the benefits to mother and child, mothers frequently feel unsupported by their communities. Sylvia Pager, M.D., a pediatrician and breastfeeding consultant at Queen's Hospital, has seen the challenges women face. "Many women find breastfeeding challenging and quickly give up. They are not alone. We encourage women to come and talk to our lactation specialists and educators to learn how to breastfeed successfully," said Pager.

On Saturday, October 2nd, hundreds of mothers and babies will "latch-on" to set a worldwide record of mothers and babies breastfeeding at one time. Last year, a total of 186 babies participated in the challenge, placing Hawaii third in the international ranking and first among U.S. participating sites.

Participation is free. Attendees will receive gift bags from sponsoring agencies and food, prizes and entertainment will be provided.

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For More Information Contact:

Darcie Yukimura
Department of Health
Phone: (808) 586-4402
E-mail: dayukimura@mail.health.state.hi.us