



Breastfeeding for Healthy Babies

By Miranda Ericsson Kendall.

Every year around 2,400 babies are born in Shawnee County. About 20 of them do not live to celebrate their first birthdays.

It's a sobering statistic, and one that the Healthy Babies Workgroup of Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods is working to change. The 2015 Community Health Improvement Plan identifies the reduction of the infant mortality rate in Shawnee County as a priority focus. The strategy to reach that goal includes increasing the number of breastfed babies and the length of time that babies are breastfed.

For moms who can choose to breastfeed, the payoff is tremendous. Breastmilk's disease-fighting antibodies help protect babies from germs and illness, so babies have a reduced risk of asthma, ear infections, and more. Plus, breastmilk is easier for babies to digest, and breastfeeding saves families money.

Moms are more likely to breastfeed when it fits into their lives, so removing barriers to nursing and pumping is important.

Target's New Breastfeeding Policy

Target is training their employees to follow a new breastfeeding policy. Here's the policy:

Guests may openly breastfeed in our stores or ask where they can go to breastfeed their child. When this happens, remember these points:

- Target's policy supports breastfeeding in any area of our stores, including our fitting rooms, even if others are waiting
- If you see a guest breastfeeding in our stores, do not approach her
- If she approaches and asks you for a location to breastfeed, offer the fitting room (do not offer the restroom as an option)

Supporting businesses that have a breastfeeding policy is a great way that you can help support women that breastfeed.

Barrier: UNCERTAINTY

As a new mom, I wasn't sure if I was allowed to breastfeed in public places, because I had rarely noticed other women nursing out in the open. A nurse at the breastfeeding clinic responded to my question by giving me a card with the Kansas Public Breastfeeding law printed on it. I was empowered by my "license to breastfeed:"

65-1,248. Breastfeeding; where. (a) Breast milk is widely acknowledged to be the most complete form of nutrition for infants, with a range of benefits for infant's health, growth, immunity and development and has also been shown to improve maternal health and bonding in addition to contributing to society at large through economic and environmental gains, it is therefore the public policy of Kansas that a mother's choice to breastfeed should be supported and encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

(b) A mother may breastfeed in any place she has a right to be.

Yeah, that's right! A nursing mom can feed her baby anywhere that she has a right to be. It feels like nursing in public is still taboo; it makes some people feel awkward. A cultural shift towards a more relaxed attitude will take time, but we can all do our part to stand up for nursing moms and to lead by calm example.

Barrier: PRIVACY

That said, a woman is much more likely to breastfeed if she isn't challenged or made to feel uncomfortable, so a very real barrier to breastfeeding is lack of privacy. Some women need privacy to feel comfortable, and it's necessary to successfully pump.

We can all support nursing moms by supporting businesses and organizations that make it easier for women to nurse comfortably. Topeka's West Ridge Mall features designated nursing rooms that give moms a clean, quiet space to nurse or pump. The Kansas Children's Discovery Center offers a big, soft chair in a family restroom, and Trampolazerrockball Park offers a separate area with a comfy chair in its ladies room. Target recently updated their store policy to give nursing moms priority access to fitting rooms, and initiated training that reminds employees that moms can nurse



their babies anywhere in the store.

Barrier: SUPPORT

Think about how you can support nursing moms. Know someone who's expecting or currently breastfeeding their baby? Here are some ideas for providing support:

- A gift card for a good nursing bra. Check before you buy the gift card to make sure that the retailer offers a good selection of items for nursing moms.
- For a mom who's headed back to work, a nice photo of baby can make pumping easier.
- Spend some time gathering resources for a new mom. Find out where the best nursing spots are and check them out first-hand so that you can give her the scoop.
- Gather information on breastfeeding support groups to share.

And, encouragement is absolutely free and only takes a second. If you know a mom who has chosen to breastfeed, cheer her on!



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