

For Information

DATE: August 14, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES IN THE REGION OF PEEL 2009/2010**FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health**OBJECTIVE**

To inform of the results of the 2009/2010 Peel Public Health survey regarding breastfeeding in the Region of Peel.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Breastfeeding initiation rates in the Region of Peel are high (97 per cent).
- Breastfeeding exclusivity rates (23 per cent at 6 months) and duration rates (19 per cent at 12 months) fall far short of national and international targets. (Canadian Pediatric Society, World Health Organization respectively).
- Peel Public Health is working collaboratively with the region hospitals and physicians to increase breastfeeding exclusivity and duration rates.
- October 1 to October 7, 2012 is World Breastfeeding Week in Canada and will be proclaimed in the Region of Peel.

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

Peel Public Health identified Nurturing the Next Generation as one of its key strategic priorities. The overall goal of this priority is to optimize early child development, focusing on preconception to 12 months of age. Optimizing early child development is a Term of Council Priority.

In 2010, the Family Health Division of Peel Public Health adopted the model, A Framework for Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Policies and Programs to Strengthen Lifelong Health (Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2010), to provide a theoretical underpinning for their work. Early childhood experiences impact the physical, social, and emotional development of children including the development of the brain, cardiovascular system, immune system, and metabolic regulatory system (Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2010). These experiences influence lifelong health and well-being and can set the stage for many chronic diseases later on in life. The model identifies three foundations of health: stable, responsive relationships; safe, supportive environments; and appropriate nutrition. Healthy nutrition from birth ensures children have an optimal

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advantage for a healthy life. Breastfeeding, as the recommended method for infant feeding, protects and contributes to the foundation of a child's optimal health and well-being.

The Canadian Pediatric Society and the World Health Organization/United Nations Children's Fund (WHO/UNICEF) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding to age two years and beyond, with the addition of complementary foods at six months of age.

Peel Public Health received the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) designation in June 2009. The Initiative is a global strategy led by WHO/UNICEF designed to increase maternal and infant health by improving breastfeeding outcomes. A key component of Baby-Friendly Initiative is to have breastfeeding policies in place for hospitals and community health settings providing maternal/child health services.

The *Breastfeeding Practices in the Region of Peel* report presents the results of Peel's third breastfeeding survey conducted between December 2009 and January 2011. This telephone survey was completed by mothers at six months and 12 months postpartum to capture information about infant feeding practices and postpartum experiences.

The goal of the survey is to provide information to assist in improving breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity in the Region of Peel.

2. Findings

Results of the breastfeeding survey showed 97 per cent of Peel mothers initiated breastfeeding, however only 58 per cent of all mothers surveyed were breastfeeding at six months of age. This is the same rate as in 2004/2005. Twenty-three per cent of all mothers were exclusively breastfeeding at six months. This is an increase from 11 per cent in 2004/2005. Of those mothers still breastfeeding at six months, only 19 per cent were breastfeeding at 12 months. It is worth noting only 2 per cent of mothers surveyed planned to breastfeed to age two years and beyond. These rates are similar to GTA breastfeeding rates in Toronto, Halton, and Durham.

Breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates were lower for teen mothers, first time mothers over the age of 40, and mothers with lower levels of education and income. First time mothers were more likely to initiate breastfeeding than repeat mothers. Mothers who had recently immigrated to Canada (under five years) had higher breastfeeding rates; however, as time living in Canada increased, the rates converged with the Canadian born rates.

The most common reason for supplementing breastfeeding with formula and for discontinuing breastfeeding was the perceived lack of breast milk. National and international guidelines state breastfeeding should only be supplemented with formula if medically indicated (Canadian Pediatric Society; WHO/UNICEF).

Mothers reported the main sources of breastfeeding support were partners, family members, hospital staff, physicians and public health staff.

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3. Recommendations

Report recommendations are as follows:

- Peel Public Health, Peel region hospitals, physicians, and community partners must work collaboratively to increase the rates of breastfeeding duration and exclusivity in the Region of Peel.
- Peel Public Health will assist Peel region hospitals to achieve Baby-Friendly Initiative designation.
- Peel Public Health will continue to offer breastfeeding services to all mothers.
- The Baby-Friendly Initiative will be the standard to guide practice and messages related to infant feeding in Peel.
- Breastfeeding strategies need to be targeted to priority populations such as teen mothers, first time mothers over the age of 40, repeat mothers, mothers with lower levels of education and income, and immigrant mothers.
- Breastfeeding messaging to address the number one identified barrier to breastfeeding, perceived lack of breast milk supply, needs to be expanded.
- Breastfeeding strategies and promotional materials need to be adapted to engage not only the mother but also her partner and extended family members.
- Peel Public Health will continue to analyze breastfeeding surveillance data, monitor breastfeeding trends, and identify community and hospital practices that impact breastfeeding.

In addition, October 1 to October 7, 2012 is World Breastfeeding Week in Canada and it will be proclaimed in the Region of Peel.

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CONCLUSION

Breastfeeding is an essential component of child health promotion. Peel Public Health is committed to working collaboratively with Peel region hospitals and physicians to improve our breastfeeding duration and exclusivity rates. Peel Public Health will maintain its Baby-Friendly Initiative status and provide support to other Peel community agencies seeking the designation. Data from the 2009/2010 survey will be used to further develop a breastfeeding support system to enable Peel residents to benefit from the long-term effects associated with breastfeeding.

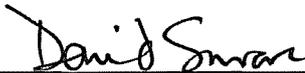


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