

HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 GOAL:

The goal is to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies. The national objectives are to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed in the early post-partum period to 75%; at 6 months to 50%; and at 1 year to 25%.⁵

Objectives focusing on exclusive breastfeeding include to increase the proportion of mothers who exclusively breastfeed at 3 months to 60% and at 6 months to 25%.

STATEWIDE:

During 2007, of 509,465 newborns in California, 86.6% had some form of breastfeeding (either partial or exclusively) while 42.7% were exclusively breastfed.⁴

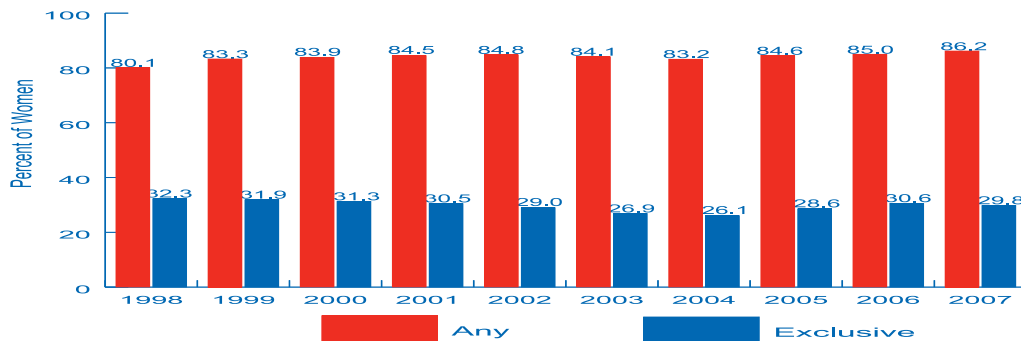
Definition of Indicator

Local statistics on breastfeeding are obtained from the In-hospital Newborn Screening Program and are presented as the percentage of mothers breastfeeding (any or exclusive breastfeeding) in the hospital after birth. An infant is exclusively breastfed when fed only with human milk and no other supplements such as water, formula, non-human milk, food, or juice. The only other substances given to exclusively breastfed infants are vitamins, minerals, and medications. Any breastfeeding is defined as feeding with both human milk and any combination of other foods.

Findings

In 2007, overall 86.2% of Orange County infants received some breast milk and 29.8% exclusively received breast milk. Whites had the highest rates of any and exclusive breastfeeding in the county at 89.0% and 51.2%, respectively. Pacific Islanders have the lowest rates for any breastfeeding at 74.3% and the numbers of Pacific Islanders reporting exclusive breastfeeding were so low that they are not reported due to confidentiality concerns. Hispanics or Latinos and Asians are in the middle for any breastfeeding but have very low rates for exclusive breastfeeding with Hispanics or Latinos at 19.0% and Asians at 24.2%.

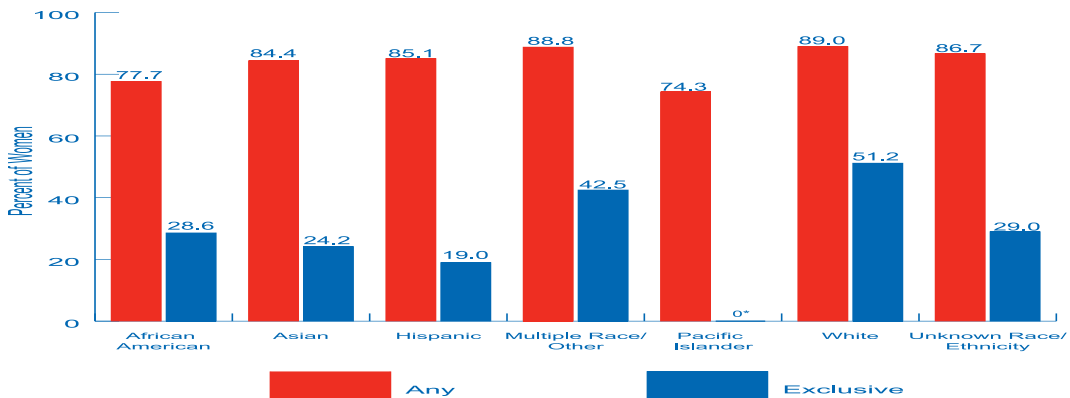
Breastfeeding Percentages in Orange County, from 1998 to 2007



Trends

From 1998 to 2007, the number of babies receiving any breastfeeding increased by 2.4%. After almost a decade of decline in exclusive breastfeeding in the county, the rates of exclusive breastfeeding bottomed out at 26.1% in 2004, but rose to 30% in 2006 and 2007.

Breastfeeding Percentages in Orange County by Race/Ethnicity, 2007



* Percentage not reported due to low numbers.

Note: Data should not be compared to data provided in prior years as there has been a change in methodology for computing these rates.

RELATED INDICATORS:

- Early Prenatal Care
- Low Birth Weight
- Supplemental Nutrition Programs: WIC & CSFP

Why is this Important?

Human milk is the optimal source of nutrition for the infant and provides many benefits for healthy growth and development. These benefits to the infant increase greatly when a mother exclusively breastfeeds her infant for the first six months of life. Breastfeeding decreases the incidence and/or severity of several infectious diseases, allergic diseases, childhood asthma, diarrhea, respiratory infection, ear infection, and urinary tract infection. Evidence also demonstrates that breastfeeding reduces the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes later in life and that exclusive breastfeeding can reduce the risk of childhood obesity.¹

Breastfeeding can provide protective health benefits for the mother who breastfeeds frequently enough and for sufficient duration. The breastfeeding mother may experience less postpartum bleeding, decreased menstrual blood loss (which conserves iron in the body), decreased risk for osteoporosis and hip fracture in the post-menopausal period, earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight, and decreased risk of breast cancer.

Breastfeeding also benefits the entire family and community. It improves household food security because families need not use income to buy formula, food, and bottles. There are also savings in health care related expenses because breastfeeding protects the infant and mother.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding along with the introduction of safe and appropriate complementary foods until at least 12 months of age.^{2,3}

What's Happening in Orange County?

Breastfeeding in the first year of life is one of the most important public health strategies for improving child survival, health, and development.

- In 2007, the percentage of exclusively breastfeeding mothers was 29.8%, a decrease of 2.6% from the previous year; while the percentage of those mothers who also offered artificial breast milk was 86.2%, an increase of 1.4% from 2006.
- Sixty-eight percent of mothers in Orange County's Nurse-Family Partnership program are between the ages of 12-17. Of all the mothers participating in Nurse-Family Partnership, 90% initiated breastfeeding which is an increase from 87% in 2007.
- Orange County ranked 42nd for exclusive breastfeeding upon discharge among all California counties in 2007.

What's Working:

- Organizations such as the Orange County Breastfeeding Coalition, Children & Families Commission of Orange County and Orange County Perinatal Council (OCPC) work together to provide and support breastfeeding. An increase in client, physician, nurse, and hospital education efforts has led to an increase in awareness of the importance of breastfeeding and an increase in exclusively breastfeeding rates.
- OCPC with the support of the County MCAH and PHN Programs have worked with the four hospitals within the county that had the lowest exclusive breastfeeding rates to explore means to measure quality improvement and conduct education to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates
- County public health staff provided a coordinated effort to raise awareness during World Breastfeeding Week. The team coordinated a Breastfeeding Awareness Kickoff Conference, hospital lunch and learn lectures and a physician education session.

✓ See page 142 in Supplemental Tables for additional data

NATIONWIDE:

Among children born in 2006 whose caregivers were interviewed in 2008 for the National Immunization Survey {(n= 16,985), 72.8% of infants were breastfeeding at 7 days and 50.4% were exclusively breastfeeding at 7 days. By 6 months of age only 13.6% were exclusively breastfeeding.

Among children born in 2006, 28 U.S. states achieved the national Healthy People 2010 objective of 75% of mothers initiating breastfeeding; whereas 13 states achieved the objective of having 50% of mothers breastfeeding their infant at 6 months of age and 20 states had 25% of mothers breastfeeding their infant at 12 months of age. California achieved all three of these Healthy People 2010 objectives.

DATA SOURCE:

Orange County Health Care Agency

NOTES:

^{1,2}AAP. Gartner LM, Morton J, Lawrence RA, Naylor AJ, O'Hare D, Schanler RJ, Eidelman AI. Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. Pediatrics 2005 Feb;115 (2):496-506

³WHO. Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Geneva, Switzerland. 2003

⁴California Department of Public Health Services, 2007