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For immediate release

Breastfeeding promotes heart health for mothers and children.

Morrisville, NC -February is American Heart Health Month and the United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) encourages Americans to celebrate with a brisk walk, a heart-healthy diet, wearing red, and an act of support for breastfeeding. Surprised? Don't be. Breastfeeding is associated with reducing the risk of developing heart disease in both the breastfeeding mothers and the children they breastfeed.

Evidence suggests that formula-fed infants tend to have higher cholesterol overall and less of the "good" cholesterol, HDL, than those who are breastfed. Additionally, children and adolescents who are breastfed exclusively in infancy tend to have less low-grade inflammation, suggesting that early feeding can impact heart health and disease risk factors later in life. Formula-feeding is also associated with increased Body Mass Index (BMI), a major risk factor in heart disease.

And the mothers themselves? Several studies have concluded that mothers who do not breastfeed have an increased risk of heart disease. In a review article published several years ago, physician Alison Steube concluded, "Mothers who do not breastfeed their infants seem to be at increased risk of ...vascular changes associated with future cardiovascular disease. retained gestational weight gain, type 2 diabetes, myocardial infarction, and the metabolic syndrome," all of which increase the risk of heart disease.

When it comes to heart health and breastfeeding, more is better. In every study, both intensity, meaning exclusive breastfeeding, and duration, or length, of breastfeeding matter. The take-away message is that breastfeeding may promote heart health for mothers, as well as adult men and women who had the good fortune to be breastfed in infancy.

Breastfeeding is important for optimal health. International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are the only credentialed health care professionals with the advanced expertise and skills needed to support breastfeeding. IBCLCs provide prenatal education and timely assistance in hospitals, health clinics, and WIC agencies. For information about becoming an IBCLC or to locate an IBCLC in your area, contact USLCA at www.uslca.org.