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“Healthy Weight Week”

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January 20-26 marks “Healthy Weight Week” and for the first time in years, there is a small slice of good news. According to research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, obesity and extreme obesity among low-income preschoolers decreased slightly between 2003 and 2010. This decrease follows years of alarming increases in childhood obesity and is significant because obese children are at greater risk for a lifetime of health and psychological challenges such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, emotional pain and premature death as compared to healthy weight peers. Obesity is also related to increased health care costs, a supersized national economic concern.

To what do we owe this small but significant decrease? Researchers believe that an increase in breastfeeding and greater awareness of health problems caused by overweight have led to these changes. In fact, during the study period, the number of low-income mothers breastfeeding their babies increased by more than 10%. Breastfeeding is one of the few interventions that have consistently shown to contribute to healthy weight for both mothers and infants and is associated with a lifetime of good health.

Promoting “healthy weight” for all citizens is an admirable national goal. Increasing breastfeeding exclusivity and duration will help achieve that goal. Breastfeeding mothers today face a host of obstacles ranging from uninformed health care providers to unsupportive friends and family members to inflexible workplaces. At every point, International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are equipped to help. Recognizing the importance of IBCLCs, Surgeon General Regina Benjamin calls for increased access to important IBCLC services deemed Essential Health Benefits by the Institutes of Medicine.

The United States Lactation Consultant Association honors Healthy Weight Week by urging health insurers to contract with IBCLCs for their members, and medical offices, health clinics and Women, Infants, and Children’s (WIC) supplemental nutrition sites, and hospitals to promote and support breastfeeding by including IBCLC care for all families. IBCLCs are the internationally credentialed health care professionals trained to help mothers, employers, and community members understand the significance of breastfeeding and help new mothers meet their breastfeeding goals. For more information or to find an IBCLC in your area, visit www.USLCA.org.