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Child Health Day

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The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) joins the nation in celebrating Child Health Day on Monday, October 1. For 90 years, the United States Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has set aside the first Monday in October to focus the nation's attention on children's health. It is sobering to consider that for the first time in history type two diabetes is emerging as a significant chronic disease in children and childhood obesity continues its upward trend.

Breastfeeding is the primary way to promote optimal health for children. Breastfeeding offers varying degrees of protection from obesity, diabetes, infections, some childhood cancers, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). An analysis of studies related to breastfeeding and obesity found a 30% decrease in the odds of overweight for a child breastfed for 9 months when compared with a child never breastfed. Additionally, a study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that the risk of SIDS almost doubles in infants who are not breastfed. School performance is important to children's health and well-being. Several studies have found that breastfed children have higher IQs and do better in school from the early grades through adolescence, even when parents' IQ and education and the child's living conditions are taken into consideration.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2012 Breastfeeding Report Card, breastfeeding initiation is on the rise. This is good news. However the number of babies who are exclusively breastfed for six months as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and other major health-related organizations remains low.

From the first prenatal appointment, to the mother's return to school or work, and throughout the baby's first year, breastfeeding must be promoted, protected, and supported until it becomes the cultural norm. It is everyone's job to promote breastfeeding, support mothers, and protect families. As Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin says, "The time has come to set forth the important roles and responsibilities of clinicians, employers, communities, researchers, and government leaders and to urge us all to take on a commitment to enable mothers to meet their personal goals for breastfeeding."

International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are health care professionals with the expertise to help families at every step of the way. IBCLCs teach breastfeeding classes, work in hospitals to help get mothers and babies off to a good start, problem-solve in out-patient sites such as physician offices, health centers, WIC sites and home care to help overcome breastfeeding trials, and work with employers to facilitate a successful back-to-work experience. IBCLCs help mothers achieve their breastfeeding goals and can help meet national goals related to child health. For more information or to locate an IBCLC, visit www.uslca.org.