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Meet Your Breastfeeding Goals: Make Sure an IBCLC is Part of Your Health Care Team!

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RALEIGH, N.C. --- A recent study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that patients connected with International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) were three times more likely to be exclusively breastfeeding at three months, more likely to be exclusively breastfeeding at one month and less likely to wean in the first six months. IBCLC care moves mothers closer to the Healthy People breastfeeding objectives for the nation and fulfills the Surgeon General's recommendation for improving access to IBCLC services.

Two separate studies were done using large samples of women from prenatal clinics in the Bronx, NY. Researchers started following the women during their pregnancy and continued up to six months after they had their babies. Breastfeeding practices were studied and the results of those who had the interventions were compared to those who had routine medical care.

Interventions Including IBCLC Care Had the Most Impact on Breastfeeding Outcomes

In one of the trials, health care providers ask prompted breastfeeding questions during routine visits. The results showed that the questions alone had no impact on breastfeeding practices. However, when combined with visits from an IBCLC, patients were three times more likely to report high intensity breastfeeding, defined as more than 80 percent of feedings in the last seven days that were breast milk. When considering exclusive breastfeeding rates, the results were impressively statistically significant. While babies benefit from any breast milk they receive, there is a growing body of evidence that exclusive breastfeeding imparts important, lifelong health protections for both mothers and infants.

When the intervention included IBCLC care, women were more likely to initiate breastfeeding and there was a higher rate of any breastfeeding at one, three and six months, as well as exclusive breastfeeding at six months.

As our nation's health care costs shift from acute illness to caring for chronic diseases such as those related to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, breastfeeding is increasing in prominence as a public health priority because of its impact on primary prevention. International Board Certified Lactation Consultants, an essential part of the perinatal health care team, are the internationally credentialed health care professionals with the education and clinical experience trained to help new mothers meet their breastfeeding goals. For more information or to locate an IBCLC in your area, visit www.USLCA.org.

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