

Media statement

5 August 2019

Empowering dads improves breastfeeding outcomes

The important role fathers play in their child's breastfeeding journey is in the spotlight this week as part of World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August).

Breastfeeding is one of the best investments in saving lives and improving the health, social and economic development of individuals and nations. The World Health Assembly has a target of at least 50 per cent exclusive breastfeeding for six months by 2025.

Cheryl Rutherford, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service Nurse Unit Manager in Maternity Services, said breastfeeding was a team effort.

"Although breastfeeding is a mother's domain, we know with close support from fathers, partners, families, workplaces and communities, breastfeeding outcomes improve," Ms Rutherford said.

"Since breastfeeding involves the mother and her closest supporters, adopting an inclusive approach is important. There are many ways fathers or partners can play a role in breastfeeding, including offering to get the mother a drink or some food while breastfeeding, settling the baby afterwards or taking care of the night time nappy changes."

Although global breastfeeding initiation rates are relatively high, and despite international recommendations, only 40 per cent of all babies under six months are exclusively breastfed and 45 per cent continue breastfeeding up to 24 months.

The World Health Assembly says improving optimal breastfeeding according to the recommendations could prevent more than 823,000 child, and 20,000 maternal, deaths each year worldwide. The Assembly also says not breastfeeding is associated with lower intelligence and results in economic losses of about \$302 billion annually. Many barriers to optimal breastfeeding exist, including a lack of support for parents at work.

"We know it's not possible for all mothers to be able to breastfeed their child, but where it is possible, mothers need to be given as much support and help that they need, both at home and in the workplace, to be able to continue their breastfeeding journey," Ms Rutherford said.

For more information on World Breastfeeding Week, visit www.waba.org.my/wbw/

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

SCHHS spokesperson is available for photo/interview opportunities by request.

Sunshine Coast

Hospital and Health Service

Media statement

ENDS

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