

# Reducing Obesity from the Start: California Hospitals Must Increase Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates

## A Report on California Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance

Produced by the California WIC Association and the UC Davis Human Lactation Center

### MARIN COUNTY

#### CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT: AN URGENT HEALTH CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA.

- More than 400,000 children under six years old are overweight, and this number continues to increase.<sup>1</sup>
- Interventions typically target school-age children, but prevention should start much earlier, as early as the day the child is born.
- Breast milk provides infants with all the nutrients they need and elements that promote growth and a healthy immune system.<sup>2</sup> Breastfeeding is also recognized as the first step in the battle against childhood overweight.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Exclusive Breastfeeding:**

**The infant receives only breast milk, no other food or fluid.**

#### BREASTFEEDING: THE FIRST STEP IN PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT.

- More than 83 percent of California mothers choose to breastfeed their infants in the hospital. Unfortunately, only 40.5 percent of these infants are breastfed exclusively—that is, breast milk is their only food.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.<sup>4</sup> Mothers who breastfeed exclusively are likely to breastfeed for a longer time. Exclusive breastfeeding offers the best protection against overweight.<sup>3</sup>

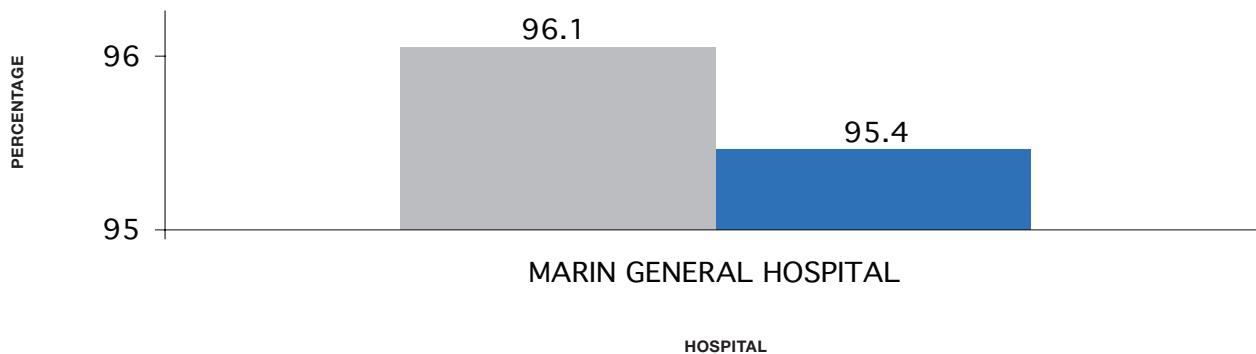
#### HOSPITAL POLICES HAVE AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON THE CHOICE A MOTHER MAKES ABOUT FEEDING HER INFANT.<sup>5,6</sup>

- Practices such as separating mothers from their babies, delaying the first feeding, and giving formula to every mother (even those who have told the hospital that they want to breastfeed) can prevent mothers from carrying out their decision to breastfeed.

The UC Davis Human Lactation Center used data from the California Department of Health Services Genetic Disease Branch to create the following charts showing in-hospital breastfeeding rates.

#### Marin County In-Hospital Breastfeeding Rates, 2004

■ ANY ■ EXCLUSIVE



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## Marin County Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance

- County average breastfeeding rates:  
Any – 96.1% Exclusive – 95.5%
- Ranked 1st in the state for exclusive breastfeeding
- One hospital ranked among the 15 best in the state for breastfeeding rates: Marin General Hospital

## Exclusive Breastfeeding by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% Exclusive	State Average
Asian	94.1	40.0
Hispanic	97.9	29.0
Multi-Race/Other	97.7	51.3
White	95.8	61.8
Missing	90.5	44.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>

For information on ways to eliminate barriers to breastfeeding, refer to the Model Hospital Policy Recommendations, June 2005 Toolkit: [www.mch.dhs.ca.gov/programs/bfp/toolkit/default.htm](http://www.mch.dhs.ca.gov/programs/bfp/toolkit/default.htm)

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