

# 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

### SAN MATEO 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.

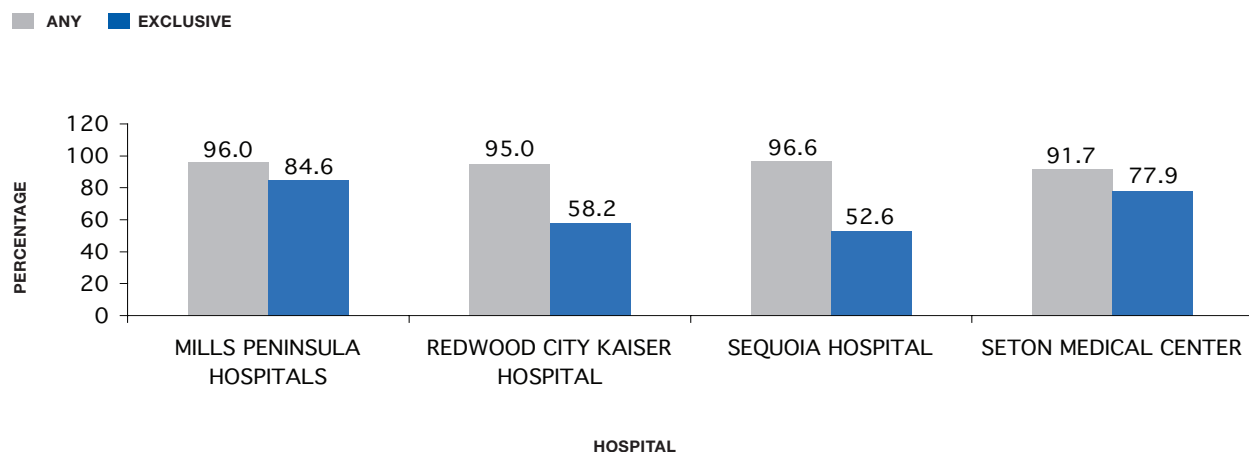
- More than 83 percent of California mothers choose to breastfeed their infants in the hospital. Unfortunately, only 40.5 percent of these infants are breastfed exclusively—that is, breast milk is their only food.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six 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.

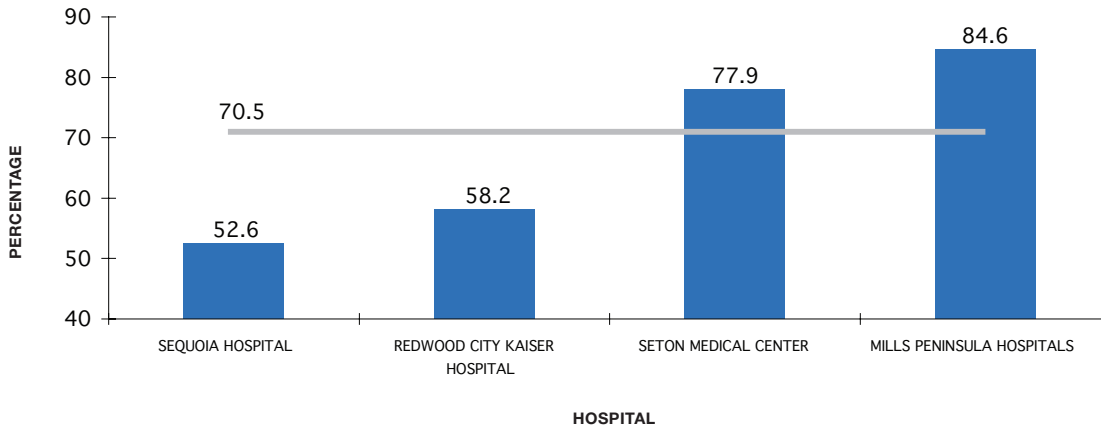
The UC Davis Human Lactation Center used data from the California Department of Health Services Genetic Disease Branch to create the following charts showing in-hospital breastfeeding rates.

#### San Mateo County In-Hospital Breastfeeding Rates, 2004



## San Mateo County In-Hospital *Exclusive* Breastfeeding Rates, Hospital and County, 2004

■ HOSPITAL RATES    — COUNTY AVERAGE



### San Mateo County Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance

- County average breastfeeding rates:  
Any – 95.4%    Exclusive – 70.5%
- Ranked 10th in the state for exclusive breastfeeding
- One hospital ranked among the 15 best in the state for breastfeeding rates: Mills Peninsula Hospital

### Exclusive Breastfeeding by Ethnicity

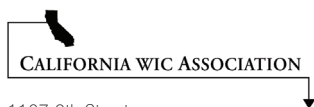
Ethnicity	% Exclusive	State Average
African-American	44.9	30.5
Asian	69.6	40.0
Hispanic	64.8	29.0
Multi-Race/Other	68.9	51.3
Pacific Islander	*	27.4
White	77.0	61.8
Missing	70.4	44.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>

\*Percent of exclusive breastfeeding not reported for fewer than 20 births in any one ethnic group.

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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1107 9th Street  
Suite 625  
Sacramento, California 95814  
(916) 448-2280  
[www.calwic.org](http://www.calwic.org)

### UC DAVIS

UC Davis Human Lactation Center  
One Shields Avenue  
Davis, California 95616  
(530) 754-5364  
<http://lactation.ucdavis.edu>

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