

28 July 2016

Going beyond 'breast is best'

„Breast is best“ is a familiar slogan to most of us, but it doesn't capture how beneficial breastfeeding can be.

This World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August), South Western Sydney Local Health District is broadening the conversation and spreading the word that breastfeeding benefits everyone – not just mum and bub.

This year's theme is *Breastfeeding: A Key to Sustainable Development* and Cathy Pratt, the District's Lactation Clinical Nurse Specialist, says it's time to start highlighting the lesser known benefits.

“It's estimated that over 4000 litres of water are needed to produce 1 kilogram of infant formula.¹ We don't often talk about the environmental impacts of breastfeeding, but it's actually a natural, renewable food and there's no pollution, waste or packaging involved,” said Ms Pratt.

It is also the foundation for lifelong health. Breastfed babies have a reduced risk of SIDS, asthma, allergies, juvenile diabetes, gastroenteritis and ear infections. Mothers who breastfeed also enjoy health benefits, including reduced risk of osteoporosis, obesity, and ovarian and breast cancers.

Young mum Sophie Copeman's first breastfeeding experience had a few rough patches, but she hasn't looked back since.

“I knew breastfeeding was important and it was something I was determined to do. After a couple of home visits from the health nurse, Jayden was attaching properly and I was lucky enough to have an adequate supply.”

Ms Copeman, now training to be a counsellor with the Australian Breastfeeding Association, said the benefits far outweighed any initial hiccups.

“It's such a time saver – there's no sterilising bottles or making up formula and it's definitely financially better for my family.”

The mum of three said it took little time for feeding to become a family affair.

“I'm now breastfeeding Lucah, my 16 month old, and his two older brothers think feeding is the solution to everything! Any time Lucah cries I hear, „Mum, he's hungry, feed him!”

¹ Linnecar A, et al. Formula for Disaster. IBFAN Asia/BPNI; 2014. Available at: <http://ibfan.org/docs/FormulaForDisaster.pdf>

Breastfeeding mothers can contact the *free* National Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 686 268 for breastfeeding support.