



**News from
American Medical Women's Association**

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AMWA on Importance of Breastfeeding: False Information and Opposition to Promoting Breastfeeding Jeopardize Health of Women and Children

SCHAUMBURG, IL - In response to the United States government denouncing language that would “protect, promote and support breast-feeding”, the American Medical Women’s Association (AMWA) stands to prevent further spread of false information that could endanger the health of American women and children.

AMWA is a national organization that aims to improve women’s health and has been the voice and vision for women in medicine for over 100 years. In seeking to promote the optimal health of newborns, infants, and mothers, AMWA condemns any form of opposition to the promotion of breastfeeding as the healthiest option for newborns and infants, when feasible.

“There is simply no replacement to the lifelong benefits of mother’s milk. Breastfeeding in any form really is a mother’s gift to her child, and every effort to protect and promote this should be undertaken,” said Dr. Neeraja Chandrasekaran, Advocacy Chair of AMWA Residents Division.

Antibodies found in breast milk are not found in alternative breast milk substitutes. Decades of research suggest that breast milk is not only the best source of nutrition for newborns and infants, but also prevents allergies, pneumonia, diarrhea, and other childhood infections. Long-term benefits include prevention of childhood obesity, better cognitive functioning, and optimal cardiovascular outcomes. For example, research suggests that the risk of sudden infant death syndrome is 36% less for infants who are breastfed at any point, while the risk of type 2 diabetes is around 40% less.

Breastfeeding promotes bonding between mother and child and also reduces risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and postpartum depression in mothers. Studies suggest that women who breastfeed for one year or longer are 28% less likely to develop ovarian cancer, while those with a cumulative lactation history of 12 to 23 months had a significantly reduced risk of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

The benefits of breastfeeding are even more pronounced for underserved and marginalized populations. These vulnerable populations are disproportionately prone to adverse health outcomes due to social and environmental barriers, including those that prevent breastfeeding. Barriers to breastfeeding include cultural stigmatization, lack of education, misperceptions, and early return to

employment. In addition, alternative milk options require preparation, further increasing the risk of poor health outcomes such as infections from contaminated water and unsterilized equipment and newborn and infant malnutrition due to over dilution to extend supplies.

“Breastfeeding, no matter how long a woman can do it, is beneficial for both mother and child. Encouraging women to breastfeed when possible is invaluable and requires a multidisciplinary approach from families, communities, healthcare providers, lactation support staff, and governmental assistance agencies,” said Dr. Theresa Rohr-Kirchgraber, AMWA Advocacy Committee Co-Chair.

Breast milk is the most readily available and affordable source of nutrition for most children. Supported by the body of objective evidence on the benefits of breastfeeding, and unaffected by political or industrial influences, AMWA does not agree with statements supporting the use of breast milk alternatives, when breast milk is available, and encourages efforts that emphasize breastfeeding as the optimal and safest modality of nutrition for children.

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