

New Guidance Encourages Moms to Nurse for Two Years

Michelle Winokur, DrPH

The Alliance for Patient Access (allianceforpatientaccess.org), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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A mother’s willingness or ability to initiate breastfeeding is dependent on many factors, including support from family, close friends, and the hospital or birth center where the child is born. However, many other barriers can potentially keep moms from exclusively nursing for even six months, long considered the benchmark before introducing “nutritious complementary foods.”

Barriers to Breastfeeding

In recognition of the challenge of a lengthened breastfeeding period, the AAP concurrently released a [technical report](#) (2) identifying hurdles and approaches to support nursing moms. Among the challenges moms face are:

- **Societal judgment:** Upwards of 80% of women breast-feed initially, establishing the practice as a “cultural norm.” However, just [one-third](#) of infants are nursed beyond one year. (3) This sharp decline can lead to judgment and comments from well-intentioned yet misinformed relations – or strangers – who may not recognize the value of longer-term breastfeeding. Similarly, providers should support nursing beyond one year, though there is [evidence](#) that is not always the case. (4)
- **Workplace barriers:** The United States is one of only a handful of upper-income countries that does not guarantee paid maternity leave. Lack of income or loss of job protection forces some moms back to work sooner than they would like. Furthermore, few businesses provide on-site childcare, making it more convenient for moms to nurse during the workday. The country also lacks requirements for workplace breaks and the provision of a clean, private space to nurse or express milk.
- **Insurance coverage:** In most cases, insurance will provide or reimburse for select breast pumps, but coverage varies by plan and is not guaranteed. Similarly, only some insurers cover lactation support. While most hospitals and birth centers provide an initial consultation, many moms require additional guidance and support to continue nursing.

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Benefits of Breastfeeding

The [benefits](#) (5) of breastfeeding for babies and moms are numerous.

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Moms who nurse likewise reap long-term benefits, including re-

duced risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

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