

PRESS RELEASE

NATIVIDAD MEDICAL CENTER OBSERVES WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK

Hospital Takes Steps to Increase Awareness & Education of the Benefits of Breastfeeding

SALINAS, Calif. – July 27, 2009 – Natividad Medical Center is observing World Breastfeeding Week, August 1-7 2009, by providing educational opportunities for new moms and holding internal events to raise awareness and education among hospital staff.

World Breastfeeding Week was initiated by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) to raise awareness of the role breastfeeding has in saving babies' lives in emergency settings, such as Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. In emergencies, breastfeeding ensures babies receive a clean, safe, sustainable supply of food and water and protects babies from infection. WABA believes that by making breastfeeding a normal routine for mother and baby, in emergency situations, the risk of common side effects for non-breastfed babies such as diarrhea and infection will be decreased to the greatest extent possible.

Every year thousands of infants die due to diseases that can be prevented by breastfeeding. Studies have shown that even during non-emergency times, breastfed babies are 80% less susceptible to prolonged episodes of ear infections than non-breastfed infants. Breastfeeding also significantly lowers the risk of diarrhea, respiratory infections, and allergic skin disorders for infants in the industrialized world.

Due to these findings, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF have joined efforts to sponsor the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), a global program to encourage hospitals to train staff and teach mothers best breastfeeding practices for optimal care. This includes providing mothers with the information, confidence and skills necessary to have a successful breastfeeding relationship with their babies as well as correcting misconceptions that exist about breastfeeding and some mothers' inability to breastfeed.

Hospitals that successfully incorporate all 10 criteria set forth by the BFHI into its routine hospital procedures are eligible to receive the Baby-Friendly Award. Natividad Medical Center has the Certificate of Intent to become a Baby Friendly Hospital. The hospital is continuing to work towards 100% achievement of the BFHI criteria in order to provide mothers and infants with the best care possible.

A follow-up outpatient Lactation Clinic will be opening in the near future to assist mothers who are having concerns and/or difficulty with breastfeeding after discharge.

For more information about Natividad Medical Center call 831-755-4111 or visit www.natividad.com. For more information on World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) visit www.waba.org.

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About Natividad Medical Center

Natividad Medical Center is a 172-bed acute care medical center owned and operated by Monterey County, and has been providing healthcare for more than 120 years. A public community hospital, Natividad Medical Center emphasizes the care of women, children and families and offers comprehensive inpatient, outpatient, diagnostic and specialty care. Natividad is the only teaching hospital on the Central Coast, through its affiliation with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). With a medical staff of more than 235 physicians, Natividad's mission is to continually improve the health status of the people of Monterey County through access to affordable, high-quality healthcare services. Natividad is based in Salinas, California. For more information, please call 831-755-4111 or visit www.natividad.com.