

A photograph of a family in a kitchen. A man in a blue plaid shirt is pouring milk from a white jug into a bowl. A woman in a black top and white cardigan stands behind him, smiling. Two young boys are at a wooden table; one is eating from a bowl with a spoon, and the other is looking at the milk jug. The kitchen has wooden beams and hanging pots.

Born and Raised The Vermont Way

loving  *support*
makes breastfeeding work

Breastfeeding is one of the most important gifts a mother can give to her child.

A mother's breast milk is quite literally the perfect food, custom-made to suit her baby's changing nutrition needs. Breastfeeding builds a lifelong bond between a mother and her baby, and gives that child a head start toward a healthy, happy life.

So why doesn't every woman breastfeed? Breastfeeding can be challenging for both new and experienced moms, especially those without access to the supports and role models she'll need to be successful. That's why the Vermont Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) created this magazine – to show moms, dads, families and friends the many different ways that breastfeeding can be part of everyday life.

We hope you'll be inspired by the great families you'll meet on these pages, and know that you too can overcome any challenges.



Harry Chen, M.D.
Commissioner of Health



Donna Bister
WIC Program Director

Vermont Department of Health

Ask WIC, your doctor or other health care provider about how to ensure breastfeeding success.

For more information about the breastfeeding resources at WIC, please visit **www.healthvermont.gov/wic** or call **800-649-4357**

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To learn more about the Vermont WIC Program, other Vermont health programs, and for more about feeding your child, visit our website at www.healthvermont.gov/wic or call 800-649-4357.

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Tara

For me, I knew I wanted to breastfeed my baby. What I wasn't really prepared for was how challenging it could be initially. I had support through WIC, my hospital and a network of supports in the community to help me get started.

In some ways I think that breastfeeding is the first and most significant gift I am giving my son. The benefits for our relationship as well as his health will be life long. And little in my life has compared to seeing when he's had his fill of breastmilk and it pours from the crevices of his mouth as he smiles hugely in satisfaction.

Saadiya

The oldest one is 15, then 13, 11, 8, 5, 4 and the baby. They were all breastfed for two years, and all are very healthy.

Breastfeeding is in our culture, our history, our way of life. When I came to the United States, of course it would be the same thing.

What could be better for them, for me?





Arlene

Diabetes runs in my family. I know that it is healthier for Maddy, so I'll breastfeed her as long as I can. I love the bonding moments, especially when she reaches out to me with her hands.

An interview with **Vicki Kirby, RN, IBCLC**



Vicki Kirby is an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) and Registered Nurse (RN). She lives and works in Addison County, Vermont.

What is a lactation consultant?

I am an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant, or IBCLC. IBCLCs have extensive training, and complete a comprehensive certification exam. We keep our knowledge, skills and practice up to date through a mandatory recertification program. As a member of the health care team, the IBCLC provides breastfeeding assistance, helps manage problems, and supports breastfeeding best practices. An IBCLC can provide consultation in the hospital or healthcare setting, and some offer home visits as well.

How long have you been a lactation consultant?

I love working with mothers and babies and have been doing this since 1980. I became a board certified lactation consultant in 1996.

What are some of the services you provide as a lactation consultant?

Oh, there are lots of things. I've been teaching a prenatal breastfeeding class at the hospital for over 10 years. It is open to everyone in the community. I also work in the Birthing Center several days a week. In my private practice, I offer home lactation visits to assist mothers and babies in all aspects of breastfeeding, to help mom achieve her goals. I rent and sell breast pumps, and other breastfeeding supplies and host a monthly breastfeeding support group that is free to anyone from pregnancy through birth, the early months, and weaning. I love the group time!

What happens in a breastfeeding class?

Breastfeeding classes go over the basics; how to get started, positions, how to recognize a good latch, how



to know that breastfeeding is going well, and who to call for help. I make sure moms know who to call if there's any question about how breastfeeding is going. It's really important to be seen within 1-3 days if you or your baby have any problems.

The class is part of the childbirth series; new parents know that learning about breastfeeding is important. I try to keep it fun, and informal.

What are some things moms can do to ensure a healthy milk supply?

The first thing is to put your baby skin-to-skin on your chest right after birth. This helps the baby to regulate heart rate, temperature and blood sugar levels, but mostly it keeps baby and mom together and helps get breastfeeding off to a great start. In a short time, your baby will show signs of hunger and will self-attach to the breast usually by 30-60 minutes of age. Lots of skin-to-skin contact and early breastfeeding helps your milk to come in (at least 8-12 times in 24 hours) and helps calm your baby.

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What are some normal challenges that a breastfeeding mom might encounter in the first few days?

Exhaustion.

I often hear from moms who feel that they are feeding all the time. Eight to twelve times in 24 hours is normal, which helps to stimulate milk production and prevent engorgement. Babies' tummies are small so they need to eat often and moms need support to rest when their baby rests.

Knowing baby is getting enough.

Parents need to know their baby is sucking and swallowing; they need to learn how to tell when their baby is feeding well, and how many wet and poopy diapers to expect. Looking at the baby's output is a good way to know if babies are getting enough.

Breastfeeding should never be painful!

It is essential to learn how to tell if the baby is properly positioned and latched-on well. If pain or other problems arise, the sooner you call for help the better.

Is there anything else you'd like to offer parents who are considering or planning to breastfeeding?

Mom's body is built to make milk. I've worked with moms who had been bottle feeding for 3 months but because of allergies wanted to go back to breastfeeding and we were able to get the milk back in. It's in our biology.

For any mom, it really helps to go to a class and connect to other moms or a support group, especially if you're the first in your family to breastfeed. There can be a lot of pressure, doubts or fear about pain or milk supply. Keep in mind – **you can do it.** Breastfeeding is what moms and babies are built to do.

Passionate
Experienced
Dedicated



Sonya & Matt

I had challenges with my first two, but we were determined to breastfeed. For the first one, I used a lactation consultant, which definitely got us off to a good start. For the second one, a WIC peer counselor was able to help identify that the problem was that he was tongue-tied. He couldn't get a good latch, and wasn't taking in enough. We went to a specialist who fixed it, and then he latched on strongly and grew well after that.

We have three kids, which can get pretty crazy. When I'm nursing, it's better for all of us – we sit down and read a book, and we all get to mellow out.

It's also easier. After the first two weeks of figuring out how your bodies fit together, it's easier because there are no bags to pack or stuff to bring. We're a self-contained unit.

An interview with **Samantha Kachmar,** **WIC Peer Counselor**



What is a peer counselor? A peer counselor is a mom who has been on the WIC program or is currently on WIC and has breastfed or is breastfeeding. We complete a breastfeeding peer counseling training program to be able to provide support to new moms – not only for breastfeeding but some of the other challenges of being a new mom too.

How long have you been a peer counselor?

I've been a peer counselor for a little over a year. Before that I was an intern at the Department of Health while I was finishing my Human Services degree, where my focus was women and children.

How many children do you have?

I have three children, I breastfed them all. For the first one, I didn't have all the support I needed, so stopped earlier than I could have. That's one of the reasons why I got into this work, so that I can support mothers in breastfeeding longer for the optimal health for both the baby and mother.

What are some of the things that a peer counselor might do with or for a mom-to-be?

When she's pregnant, we share information about breastfeeding and what to expect. Peer counselors can meet with moms one to one, and we also run a mom-to-mom breastfeeding class. In that class we cover the first 48 hours of what to expect in the hospital and when you bring the baby home. We call moms on a monthly basis or more frequently, to answer questions and give information to help them make an informed decision about breastfeeding. And we also connect moms to resources if something comes up that is beyond our scope. We can refer them to an IBCLC, which is an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant.

Understanding
Empowering
Connecting
Supporting
Encouraging

I think a big part of peer counseling is just reassuring moms. Not every mom is going to have breastfeeding problems or issues, for some it just works like clockwork. But some have normal challenges, and we explain that what is happening is normal or to be expected and that they're doing the best thing for their baby. Some moms do have more challenges, like thrush or mastitis, and we can support them as they seek out help for those things.

We also do home visits if needed, to help with latch or confidence building. We can meet our moms at their WIC visit, if they choose, and speak with them there. Behind the scenes, we work with community partners (such as La Leche League, MD offices, etc.) to provide outreach and increased awareness and support of breastfeeding. This, hopefully, helps to build stronger, family friendly communities in which to live and work!

Since we're all moms, we've all experienced the exhaustion, maybe some challenge like clogged ducts, and so we been there, and can support moms from our own experience.

What sort of tips might you give new moms who are considering breastfeeding?

Making milk is a natural process – your body will do that. But breastfeeding is a learned skill. Taking a breastfeeding class is an important step, either through WIC or your local hospital. In the mom-to-mom class, we talk about skin-to-skin, frequency of feeds, about the tummy size of the baby, how many wet or dirty diapers to expect, and signs that your baby is getting enough. We also talk to them about the latch, and what a good latch would mean. The challenge with all of this is that it is like riding a bike; you can talk to someone about it, but unless you're actually doing it, it's not all going to make sense until you do it. At least they have the information floating in their head, so can call on it if they need to.



Peer counselors are here to help – we make several phone calls throughout the pregnancy, and can help with challenges as they arise or offer referrals. We're all extremely dedicated to supporting moms to reach their breastfeeding goal!



Corrie

Breastfeeding doesn't always come easily. Sure your body makes milk, but it's sometimes hard. It takes practice. With each son, and I have three, there have been different challenges. But with each child I've been able to breastfeed two months longer – the last one was for 14 months.

You don't really know what to expect until you do it. The first child was the most challenging because I was new at it. And working at the farm, being able to meet the demands of the animals and the child, it was definitely easier to breastfeed without having to deal with bottles and formula.





Chelsa

Before I had Jack I was just a teenager, and wanted to go on being a teenager. And then when I had him, I knew breastfeeding was the right decision.

When I was in the hospital I knew I wanted to get it right, and called for help whenever I needed help getting him to latch on. I'm still breastfeeding 13 months later.



Confident

Successful



Connected

Rewarding

Powerful



Engaging

Satisfying



We're here to help moms succeed.

Pediatricians know that breastfeeding is best for both baby and mom. The longer they breastfeed the better. Doctors and other healthcare providers also know that breastfeeding is a learned skill, and often requires time and practice. Talk to your doctor and other birthing support staff about how to prepare for breastfeeding, and how to put your own supports in place so that you can reach your breastfeeding goals.

WIC is here too. Vermont WIC offers many services to help you succeed with your breastfeeding goals. Whether you're looking for support as you and your baby are learning to breastfeed, or going back to work, you can rely on WIC to help you at every step of the way.

- **WIC Food Packages for breastfeeding moms** include lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and other healthy foods to help you eat well.
- **Peer Counselors** if you would like a little more personalized support.
- **Breastfeeding Groups** where you can come for help and meet other moms just like you.
- **Referrals** to lactation consultants and other support services.
- **Breast Pumps** and other supports to help transition back to work or school.
- **Nutrition Counseling** during pregnancy, breastfeeding and your baby's first years.
- **Continuing Care** and information throughout early childhood.

Barre
802-479-4200 barreolh@state.vt.us

Bennington *Peer Counselors Available*
802-447-3531 bennolh@state.vt.us

Brattleboro
802-257-2880 brattolh@state.vt.us

Burlington *Peer Counselors Available*
802-863-7323 burlohl@state.vt.us

Morrisville
802-888-7447 morrolh@state.vt.us

Newport
802-334-6707 newpolh@state.vt.us

St. Johnsbury
802-748-5151 stjolh@state.vt.us

Springfield
802-885-5778 springolh@state.vt.us

White River Junction
802-295-8820 wrj.wic@state.vt.us

Middlebury *Peer Counselors Available*
802-388-4644 middolh@state.vt.us

Rutland *Peer Counselors Available*
802-786-5811 rutolh@state.vt.us

St. Albans *Peer Counselors Available*
802-524-7970 staolh@state.vt.us

Call your local WIC office
for services or referrals.
healthvermont.gov/wic

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CHILDREN
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