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## COMMUNITY

### Breastmilk a lifesaver for baby in times of emergency

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Special to the Herald - The Chippewa County Department of Public Health joins the American Public Health Association (APHA) to encourage communities and families to prepare effectively for public health threats during National Public Health Week, April 2-8.

What are disaster threats to the public's health? Public health emergencies can include such events as floods, severe weather, tornados, terrorist activities and disease outbreaks.

Monday, April 2 is the day designated to address the unique needs of mothers with infants and young children in the household in preparing for emergencies. One of the steps mothers must take is to assure the household has adequate food and water to keep their children and themselves well.

Fortunately, nature has helped assure mothers can be prepared to keep their young children well fed and hydrated. Mother's breast milk is the perfect food and fluid for infants and young children. Breastfeeding has been life-saving through events that have left mothers and children stranded without much food or safe water.

In contrast to powdered formula, which needs to be mixed with water, human milk provides ample hydration and spares infants exposure to water that may be contaminated during the destruction caused by natural disasters. Direct breastfeeding also prevents babies from getting sick when bottles and nipples are "washed" in unclean water.

It is a myth that stress causes breast milk to dry up or that mothers who are not able to eat well can't breastfeed their babies. Mothers who have stopped breastfeeding in the last 6 months can even re-establish a milk supply by putting baby to breast often or expressing breast milk with a pump.

Breastfeeding also provides protection against respiratory and diarrhea illnesses that can be fatal in populations displaced by disaster. Breastfeeding provides babies comfort during times of crisis as well as peace of mind for mothers in knowing their baby will be fed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and multiple health organizations around the world encourage all mothers to breastfeed their infants at birth and continue to breastfeed through the first year of life and beyond as mutually desired by mom and baby.

Establishment of lactation will protect the baby's health for months and possibly years to come. It may save a baby's life in time of a public health emergency.

For more information about safe infant feeding in natural disasters contact the Chippewa County Department of Public Health or read more at [www.bfmed.org](http://www.bfmed.org), [www.lalecheleagues.org/emergency.html](http://www.lalecheleagues.org/emergency.html)

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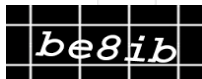


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