

## **HEALTH PROMOTION AND PROTECTION--New Breastfeeding Campaign Launched**

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Breastfeeding is natural, but it may not happen naturally. It may take time to learn.

That is the foundation of a new campaign designed to help and support new moms and their babies through the toughest first few weeks of breastfeeding. The campaign's slogan is Breastfeeding: Learning Makes It Natural. It was launched today, Oct. 1, the first day of World Breastfeeding Week.

Research with mothers, families and health care professionals revealed that moms often do not feel prepared or have realistic expectations about breastfeeding. Many think it is going to be easier and more natural than it feels when their babies are first born. They feel pressure to be supermoms, and often fear they will fail at breastfeeding. They also say they need more support and want to know where to go for help.

"New moms need to know they're not alone," said Health Promotion and Protection Minister Maureen MacDonald. "The first six weeks of breastfeeding are the most difficult and we want moms, their partners and their families to start out with realistic expectations, and know there's help and support out there if they need it."

The campaign has been designed to show the successes and challenges associated with breastfeeding in an honest and realistic way. It includes television, print and online ads, posters and bookmarks, and a website, [first6weeks.ca](http://first6weeks.ca). The website will help mothers connect with other moms who are going through the same experiences, and will help them find support for breastfeeding.

Research suggests 88 per cent of Nova Scotians know that breastfeeding is healthier for babies, and that 77 per cent of Nova Scotians support moms breastfeeding in public. It is recommended that all babies be exclusively breastfed until six months of age with continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond once family foods are introduced. This is in keeping with

national and international research and recommendations. While breastfeeding rates have improved over the last number of years, Nova Scotia continues to have among the lowest rates of breastfeeding in the country. About 75 per cent of moms start to breastfeed when their child is born, yet only 36 per cent of them are still breastfeeding at four months.

Sarah Thompson of Halifax is still breastfeeding her one-year-old child and while she experienced many challenges in the first few months, she is glad she stuck with it.

"I was totally unprepared for the breastfeeding battle I would face as a new mom," said Ms. Thompson. "I expected it to come naturally but it was a lot of work. I couldn't have had a successful breastfeeding experience without getting help from a larger community support network."

Each District Health Authority supports and promotes breastfeeding in different ways. Examples include telephone support lines, resources for employers and business owners to help them support breastfeeding employees, family resource centres and community support groups in the province, including La Leche League.

For breastfeeding support and information, visit [first6weeks.ca](http://first6weeks.ca).

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