

Richmond Review Article – Breastfeeding: A Winning Goal for Life!

By Colin Dring

“Hold on, I have to feed Juni, she’s getting cranky!” my friend Janet says to me as we’re sipping coffees in trendy Kitsilano last week. Janet is visiting from Korea where she’s been working for the past few years. She’s also a very close friend, almost like a sister to me. Little Juni is adorable; she has two faces, frowning face, and a strange constipated face, which confounds description. Needless to say, very cute.

Janet shamelessly preps Juni for feeding time right there on the side of the busy street as I casually mention to her that I’ve been sitting on a Breastfeeding Advisory group in Richmond for the past couple of years. She jokingly points out my lack of children and maybe I’m starting to feel the pressure to move from bachelorhood to committed/devoted father figure to my own bundle of gurgling joy. While she jokes, she’s incredibly attentive to many of the lessons that I’ve learned being a part of the Breastfeeding Advisory group.

This year’s World Breastfeeding Week – Breastfeeding: A Winning Goal for Life aims to raise public awareness about the Millennium Development Goals developed by the United Nations. While breastfeeding hits all eight of the [Millennium Development Goals](#), two are of particular interest this year: (1) Reducing Child Mortality & (2) Improve Maternal Health. Moms and their babies form an inseparable biological and social entity; the health and nutrition of one cannot be separated from the other, so it is important that breastfeeding should be high on the public agenda.

Lack of breastfeeding, particularly during the first half-year of life, is a significant risk factor for infant and childhood mortality and impaired development. The life-long detrimental effects includes poor school performance, reduced productivity, and impacted intellectual and social development.

Right after the birth of their child, many mothers get off to a strong start with breastfeeding their babies. However, after only a few weeks or months post-delivery, many mothers decide to reduce how often they breastfeed their children, occasionally using other methods like formula, or even stopping altogether. The World Health Organization recommends *exclusive breastfeeding for up to 6 months of age*, with *continued breastfeeding* along with appropriate complementary foods *up to two years of age or beyond*.

This extended breastfeeding period doesn’t just benefit babies, but their mother’s as well, whose health is notably enhanced through regular breastfeeding. Studies demonstrate that increased bone density, reduced risk of cancer and a faster return to pre-pregnancy health are key benefits for mums. Also, enhanced bonding with babies and better rest and relaxation helps support the emotional/mental well-being of mothers and fathers. But the advantages of breastfeeding don’t end there. A number of key family and community benefits also arise from breastfeeding. These can include lower household costs, time saved for busy parents, less waste from packaging, and other benefits; not bad bonuses to go with having an overall healthier baby.

The best chance to succeed in life, for a large part, rests in what we feed our babies and children. Knowledgeable health workers are needed to provide the skilled support that mothers and fathers need to learn the best feeding practices and to overcome difficulties when they occur. We already know that Dads have a strong role to play as family providers and caregivers, helping out moms whenever possible,

but too often in our busy world we forget that community networks are important too, bringing mother-to-mother support and trained breastfeeding counsellors to help guide parents.

It takes a community of people to create safe, inclusive spaces where mothers can do the best for their children. To learn more, visit the Richmond Public Library – Brighthouse Branch on [insert dates] or talk to your healthcare professional.

“Feed Right to Feel Right” - Richmond Food Security Society works to ensure that all people in the community have access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate foods that strengthen our environment and society. If you want to get involved visit our website at www.richmondfoodsecurity.org