



Australian
Breastfeeding
Association

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3 AUGUST 2012

More than 90% of breastfeeding mothers seek professional help

More than 90% of breastfeeding mothers seek professional help with breastfeeding in their baby's first 6 months, but many are being hampered by outdated, incorrect or inconsistent advice.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) polled 3,800 breastfeeding mothers for World Breastfeeding Week, which runs until 7 August. The poll showed 71% of mothers sought advice about breastfeeding from a midwife, 58% from a child health nurse, 46% from a lactation consultant and 24% from their GP. Only 9.5% had never sought professional help.

'There is a misconception in the community that breastfeeding comes naturally, but there are many barriers to breastfeeding', Kate Mortensen, manager of ABA's Lactation Resource Centre says. 'Breastfeeding is actually a learned skill and our poll shows that the vast majority of mothers need help along the way.'

Getting the right skilled help can be a challenge for mothers though, as some health professionals receive little training in how to manage their concerns. For instance, many student doctors receive limited or no training in breastfeeding management during their university study and ongoing training is not routinely offered.

'Our breastfeeding counsellors often hear stories from mothers who are given outdated or incorrect advice and this can seriously affect the mother's chances of breastfeeding', Ms Mortensen said. 'Mothers also describe receiving inconsistent advice on what to do, with one health professional saying one thing and another advising a different thing. This can leave them confused and not knowing what to do.'

The Australian Breastfeeding Association launches its new book *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* on Saturday 4 August at 2.00 pm with a free seminar for 100 health professionals at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Edited by Dr Wendy Brodribb, herself a GP as well as a lactation consultant, the book is written for the wide range of health professionals who need to help mothers with breastfeeding.

'Australian health professionals are extremely caring and hardworking and are often managing a wide range of health issues as well as breastfeeding', Ms Mortensen said. 'They deserve access to up-to-date information so they can give good advice to mums.'

About 95% of Australian mothers start out breastfeeding, but a quarter of them have given up by the time their baby is 3 months, mainly due to a lack of correct support at the right time.

Mothers can receive skilled help from ABA's volunteer breastfeeding counsellors, who complete a 12-month Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education. This skilled help is available through ABA's network of local support groups, its website and its 24-hour Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 268).

For further information or interview please contact:

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General breastfeeding information and policy statements: www.breastfeeding.asn.au/media