

CRDAMC lactation consultants educate moms, offer support to ensure success

By Brandy Gill and Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Expecting mothers make several big decisions while they wait for their little additions to arrive, but breastfeeding is by far one of the most difficult and personal choices they face.

Research has shown that breastfeeding is the best option for both moms and babies. Still, many women have concerns or fears that lead them to choose not to breastfeed.

To encourage them, the lactation specialists at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center are promoting awareness during World Breastfeeding Week, which is celebrated in more than 170 countries worldwide from August 1 – 7, Maria Hattaway, an international board certified lactation consultant for CRDAMC, said.

“Breastfeeding is the best way to ensure babies receive the critical nutrients and antibodies that help them thrive and protect them from germs and illness,” she said.

This year’s World Breastfeeding Week theme, established by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy (WABA), is *“Talk to Me: Breastfeeding, a 3-D Experience.”*

The focus is on the importance of connection between mother and baby (2-dimensions), and the third dimension is support from the health care provider, friends, family members, and others who are all essential for the mother’s success, Hattaway said.

“Breastfeeding may not always be as simple and easy to do as many think, so we want our mothers to know that we are here to help them,” she said. “We offer a wide variety of support, with hands-on training and education.”

That support is critical because breastfeeding can be tricky, and new moms can get discouraged, Tara Haberl, a CRDAMC lactation consultant said.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control website says that while three out of every four new mothers in the United States now starts out breastfeeding, the breastfeeding rates at three, six, and 12 months indicate that moms aren’t sticking with it.

The most common concerns Haberl says she has encountered are pain while feeding and mothers feel they aren’t making enough milk.

“I always tell our moms that childbirth is painful enough. Breastfeeding isn’t supposed to hurt, and they don’t have to toughen up. If the (baby’s) latch and position are correct then you shouldn’t have to clench your teeth or curl your toes,” Haberl said. “A lot of women also worry they aren’t making enough milk, but the truth is, moms make plenty of milk. What really is probably going on is the baby is struggling to access the milk due to latch trouble.”

While Hattaway and the other lactation specialists at Darnall believe breastfeeding is the best choice for moms and babies, she said they all respect the mother's choice not to breastfeed, and they don't pressure or coerce anyone.

"I don't believe in teaching by intimidation. We offer the information and support, but it's still up to the mother," Hattaway said. "Often, I find that women may just be misinformed about breastfeeding and not sure that it will fit their lifestyle. Once they have all the facts, and have learned how it has worked for many other moms, they may change their mind."

If you're considering breastfeeding, don't wait until the baby is born to learn about your options Hattaway said.

"The best time to learn about breastfeeding is before the baby is born," she said. "Use available services, get all the information beforehand. Don't wait until baby is born because post-partum moms are tired."

CRDAMC lactation consultants are located in the Mother/Baby Unit, the Women's Health Center and the Newborn Follow-Up Clinic.

They offer breastfeeding classes every month, and a Lunch 'N Latch support group for mothers and babies. A new parent support program is also available that provides free in-home breastfeeding support, parenting skills support and child development information.

To find out more about any of these programs talk to your provider at any prenatal check-up or with your baby's pediatrician.

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## CUTLINES

CUTLINE 1: Tara Haberl, a CRDAMC lactation consultant, discusses myths and facts about breastfeeding with expectant mothers in a class that is hosted monthly. Haberl urged participants to seek help as quickly as possible if they found they were having trouble breastfeeding their newborns instead of giving up. (Photo by Brandy Gill, CRDAMC Public Affairs, July 20, 2011.)

### CUTLINE 2:

Tara Haberl, a CRDAMC lactation consultant, explains the process of milk production at an informational breastfeeding class for expectant mothers. Aug 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week, and more than 170 countries work to recognize the benefits of breastfeeding and support mothers who breastfeed. (Photo by Brandy Gill, CRDAMC Public Affairs, July 20, 2011.)