



A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF LACTATION PROFESSIONALS

## International Lactation Consultant Association

# 2009 Flu Season Action Ideas for Lactation Consultants

**November 16, 2009**

The heightened global concerns about 2009 H1N1 Influenza virus infection have opened many opportunities for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) to assist as vital members of the health care team in preventing the spread of infection and disease. IBCLCs not only provide direct breastfeeding assistance and support to new families, they provide valued assistance in establishing protocols and policies, training staff, and educating families. Here are a few action ideas to consider.

### Assist with Policy Development and Staff Training

1. Review your hospital or birthing center's maternity care practices and work to improve any practices that do not follow the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" established by the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.
2. Assure that early breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact among mothers who are *not* ill with H1N1 are fully supported.
3. Share guidance documents on protecting breastfeeding in hospitals and birthing facilities when new mothers are ill (see ***Influenza References*** [http://www.ilca.org/files/in\\_the\\_news/H1N1/InfluenzaReferencesV2\\_1132009.pdf](http://www.ilca.org/files/in_the_news/H1N1/InfluenzaReferencesV2_1132009.pdf))
4. Assure that your hospital has appropriate policies, accommodations, and equipment for milk expression and storage in the event a mother is too ill to breastfeed.
5. Assure that all labor and delivery and postpartum staff are trained and competent in proper techniques for milk expression and alternative feeding methods.
6. Develop/share information and resources with adult caregivers who might be asked to feed expressed milk to an infant of an infected mother, and on the benefits of skin-to-skin contact they can provide the baby.
7. Assure that postpartum staff are trained in helping mothers directly breastfeed if an infant has been receiving feeds from alternative methods.
8. Assure that mothers are connected to professional breastfeeding support upon discharge for skilled breastfeeding follow-up.
9. Connect mothers to other available community breastfeeding support for ongoing encouragement.
10. Monitor changes in breastfeeding activity and rates that may result from any policies established during flu season.

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11. Distribute information to your local media to promote the importance of breastfeeding using ILCA's **Press Release**, [http://www.ilca.org/files/in\\_the\\_news/H1N1/H1N1\\_PressRelease\\_200910.pdf](http://www.ilca.org/files/in_the_news/H1N1/H1N1_PressRelease_200910.pdf), now available in English, Spanish, and French.

### **Promote PREVENTION of Influenza**

- Health officials worldwide are consistent in recommending the flu vaccine as a vital means of preventing the spread of both seasonal and H1N1 influenza. Encourage pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to talk with their physician about the potential benefits of vaccines, which are considered safe during both pregnancy and breastfeeding. Studies show that vaccines during pregnancy not only protect the mother, but cross the placenta to provide important antibody protection to the fetus, as well. (See **Influenza References** [http://www.ilca.org/files/in\\_the\\_news/H1N1/InfluenzaReferencesV2\\_1132009.pdf](http://www.ilca.org/files/in_the_news/H1N1/InfluenzaReferencesV2_1132009.pdf))
- Encourage mothers to wash hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially before handling the baby, and to avoid pacifiers and other items that cannot be properly sanitized.
- Advise mothers and other caregivers to cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, especially around baby, using a disposable tissue that is discarded immediately.
- Remind mothers to eat nutritious foods and get plenty of rest.
- Ask visitors to stay away from the baby if they are ill.
- Mothers should report symptoms of the flu to her physician immediately for prompt treatment. Antiviral medications are compatible with breastfeeding and are most effective when they are begun within 48 hours of the beginning of symptoms. Health officials also suggest that antiviral therapy can be effective in preventing the flu if the mother has been exposed to someone with the flu.

### **Encourage Exclusive Breastfeeding**

- Remind pregnant and breastfeeding mothers of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, especially during flu season when illnesses and infections are heightened.
- Revisit policies in maternity care settings that may be obstacles to exclusive breastfeeding.
- Promote the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, recently endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, along with numerous other medical and professional organizations worldwide.
- Provide education for health professionals at hospitals, local physician offices, public health clinics, and other venues.

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## Distribute ILCA Resources

Check the ILCA website at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org) for materials available as free downloads.

- **For Families:** “Tips for Parents: How to Keep Baby Well During Flu Season” (available in English, Spanish, and French)
- **For Healthcare Providers:** “Influenza References”
- **For Media:** ILCA Press Release (available in English, Spanish, and French)

For more information, contact ILCA at [info@ilca.org](mailto:info@ilca.org) or call toll-free at: 1-888-ILCA-IS-U

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