

To: ILCA Members

RE: Swine Flu Outbreak

As the swine influenza A (H1N1) outbreak continues to escalate worldwide, the International Lactation Consultant Association urges International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) and other health care providers and breastfeeding support workers to heighten efforts to promote and support breastfeeding, particularly exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months of life, and continued breastfeeding for at least a year and beyond.

ILCA has distributed a press release about the importance of continued breastfeeding during the swine flu outbreak to major media outlets across the world, and encourages local ILCA members to distribute the release to your local media, as well. The release is available at the ILCA Press Room at: http://www.ilca.org/files/in_the_news/press_room/2009-04-28_PressRelease_SwineFlu.pdf

The Centers for Disease Control has today issued updated guidance for clinicians regarding breastfeeding during the swine flu outbreak, encouraging exclusive breastfeeding as a priority to enhance maternal antibodies to infants and to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal and respiratory problems common with the swine flu. The CDC also recommends providing expressed breast milk to an infant who is too ill to feed directly at the breast. The CDC guidance is available at: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinician_pregnant.htm

Because infants are at higher risk of complications from the swine flu (as well as seasonal flu) breastfeeding becomes even more important as a strategy for reducing infant illness and death. IBCLCs are in a unique position to alert families and health care providers about the importance of breastfeeding, how to protect breastfeeding in the first hour after birth, and to assist families with early concerns and continued breastfeeding. IBCLCs can also provide assistance in helping families with the use of breast pumps or acquiring donor human milk if needed for infants who are too ill to breastfeed.

ILCA also encourages all ILCA members to become and remain updated with CDC recommendations related to breastfeeding as more is learned about the swine influenza A (H1N1) virus. This will help you remain evidence-based in providing timely and accurate support to families and healthcare workers.

For more information, contact the ILCA Office at: info@ilca.org

Sincerely,

Cathy Carothers, Director of Marketing
ILCA Board of Directors