

Opinion: Bringing awareness to breastfeeding

By Alicia Paris-Pombo

August is World Breastfeeding Awareness Month. During the month of August, health professionals in El Dorado County are raising awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and sharing information about local resources and supports for breastfeeding mothers.

Breast milk is the best food you can give your baby. Breast milk has important ingredients that can help protect the baby from infections, reduce the risk of allergic conditions and aid the baby with digestion. Babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop childhood obesity. Breastfeeding also has many health benefits for the mother.”

I am a member of the Breastfeeding Coalition of El Dorado County, a group comprised of local hospitals, First 5 El Dorado, El Dorado County Office of Education and the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency. The coalition helps breastfeeding mothers get the resources and support they need. Many resources are free. The coalition provides education on all areas of breastfeeding, including how to help baby latch on properly, the best breastfeeding positions, breastfeeding equipment, and tips to successfully transition back to work. The group provides referrals as necessary.

A special project of the coalition is the Express Stop program which has hospital-grade electric breast pumps available for loan to new mothers returning to work or school in El Dorado County free of charge. For information or to reserve a pump, call 530.906.7872 on the western slope of El Dorado County or 530.573.3049 in South Lake Tahoe.

The El Dorado County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program

also has breastfeeding support services and breast pumps for loan to income eligible mothers in El Dorado County and can be reached at 530.621.6176 or 530.573.3491. In addition, moms may access lactation consultant advice and resources through Marshall Medical Center at 530.626.2835 and through Barton Health at 530.543.5547.

It's important for new mothers returning to work to know that California law requires employers to provide reasonable break times and a private location for them to pump breast milk at work. It's a good idea for working women to have the conversation with their employer ahead of time.

Alicia Paris-Pombo is El Dorado County's health officer.