

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROMOTES BREASTFEEDING DURING NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH**

(White Plains, NY) – During World Breastfeeding Week, which runs from August 1 through 7, and National Breastfeeding Month, in August, the Westchester County Department of Health is recognizing the public health contribution of breastfeeding mothers.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “I encourage all new mothers to give breastfeeding a chance because breast milk is best for baby. It provides antibodies that can protect infants from diseases before they are fully vaccinated. It can reduce their risk of Sudden Infant Death and their risk of obesity later in life, and it also benefits mothers.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends infants breastfeed exclusively until they are six months old. In June, the Academy also issued new guidance urging pediatricians to support parents who continue to breastfeed after solid foods are introduced at six months, and up until the child is two or older.

Through its Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Health Department supports mothers who breastfeed by providing them with breast pumps, additional nourishing food and the help of certified lactation counselors and peer counselors. Currently, 117 WIC moms are exclusively breastfeeding and 470 are partially breastfeeding.

To promote the important benefits of breastfeeding and to honor exclusively breastfeeding WIC moms, the Westchester County Health Department WIC program has launched a virtual game they can play to compete for prizes based on their breastfeeding know-how. Participants will use clues to complete a crossword puzzle, then text or email their results to the WIC Program. Chosen via raffle on August 1 to kick off World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month, winners will receive baby-related gifts donated by community partners and will be featured on the Health Department Facebook Page.

Westchester WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator Angela Ngowi said: “This contest is a show of appreciation to breastfeeding mothers for giving their babies the best start in life. We introduce breastfeeding basics to pregnant WIC clients through our virtual breastfeeding classes, and help new mothers learn what to expect during delivery and beyond.”

The crosswords are due July 29, and winners will be selected August 1. Moms who are selected will be asked to take a selfie with their baby and send it in along with a few sentences about why breastfeeding their baby is important to them.

Test your breastfeeding IQ\* with these clues:

1. What is the healthiest way to feed your baby?
2. What protective substance found in breast milk can help build your baby’s immune system?
3. Name one thing a mom can do to maintain her milk supply when away from her baby?

Amler also thanked local hospitals for helping new mothers as they start breastfeeding, and encouraged residents and businesses to support the efforts of mothers to continue breastfeeding as their babies grow.

Benefits to babies who receive their mother’s milk:

- fewer ear infections, respiratory infections and digestive infection;
- lower risk of developing diabetes or cancer;
- lower risk of developing asthma and allergies;
- less likely to be obese later in life; and
- less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Benefits to women who breastfeed their infants:

- recover faster after birth and tend to lose pregnancy weight faster;
- less likely to develop diabetes;
- reduced risk for breast and ovarian cancer;
- less stress and reduced risk of postpartum depression;
- enhance their bond with their baby through skin-to-skin touching and eye contact that is shared during breastfeeding;
- save time: breast milk is always ready;
- save money by not buying formula.

\*1 is breastfeed; 2 is antibodies; 3 is pump.

More information on breastfeeding is available at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

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### **About Westchester County**

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just over one million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com)

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