



For Immediate Release  
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## **Around 18% of Children in the Coachella Valley, Age 5 and Younger, Have Not Been Breastfed**

***Palm Desert, CA (August 2018)*** —In the Coachella Valley, the majority of mothers breastfeed, however, some still do not. In deciding whether to breastfeed or not, it is important to consider the benefits such as a reduced risk for certain health conditions and thus decreased medical spending. For example, more than three billion dollars in medical costs are accumulated annually in the United States for mothers and their children due to low rates of breast-feeding. In the Coachella Valley, of children age 5 and younger, 82.0% (25,239 children), have been breastfed, whereas **18.0% (5,536 children) have not been breastfed.**

### ***Health Benefits***

Breastfeeding has health benefits for both the child and the mother. Breastmilk is the main source of nutrition for developing infants. When infants are breastfed, there are certain unmatched health benefits. Some of which include a reduced risk for asthma, obesity, type 2 diabetes, ear and respiratory infections, and sudden infant death syndrome. ***In other words, the previously mentioned 5,536 children that were not breastfed have a higher risk for these health conditions.*** Mothers who breastfeed also receive health benefits. For example, these mothers will have a reduced risk of heart disease, type 2 Diabetes, ovarian cancer, and breast cancer.

### ***Guidelines***

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants should be exclusively fed breast milk for the first 6 months of their lives. ***In the Coachella Valley, of children age 5 and younger who have been breastfed, about 26.9% (5,700 infants) stopped being breastfed at 3 months or less. Another 30.4% (6,442 infants) stopped being breastfed at 4 to 6 months.*** In other words, at least 5,700 infants have not met the American Academy of Pediatric guidelines for breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding should continue between six months to one year, but solid foods can also be gradually introduced into the infant's diet. After one year, the decision to continue

breastfeeding is at the discretion of the mother and her infant. The World Health Organization encourages a longer duration of breastfeeding with a suggestion of food and breastmilk for up to two years of age or beyond.

New mothers and expecting mothers can also benefit from reviewing the additional nursing guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some of these guidelines are useful for facilitating and initiating the breastfeeding process. For example, the practice of skin-to-skin care in which the infant is placed directly on the mother or caregiver for maximum skin-to-skin contact. Another practice includes rooming-in, which includes having the mother and infant remain together, 24 hours per day during the hospitalization period at birth. Another guideline includes delaying the introduction of pacifiers until breastfeeding has been established.

It is important to note, however, that there are situations in which a mother should not breastfeed. For example, some of these include taking certain medications (e.g., antiretroviral, birth control, migraine medications, mood stabilizers, sleep aids), having a specific illness (e.g., HIV, human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I or type II, active tuberculosis), or other specific conditions (e.g., women with certain chronic illnesses, breast surgery, active substance users, or having an infant with galactosemia). Of course, the decision to not breastfeed should always be discussed with your healthcare provider.

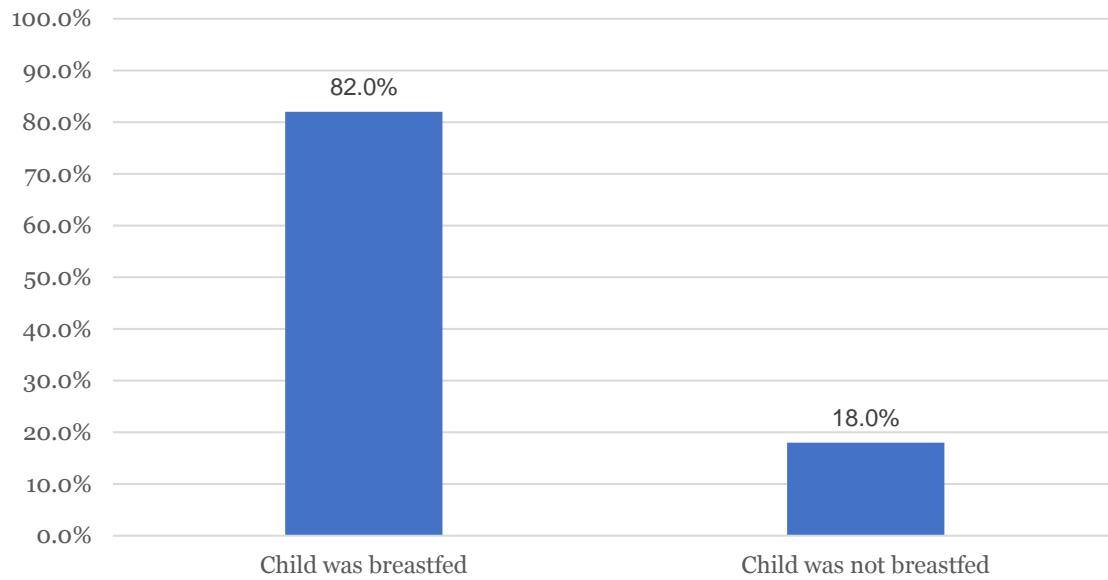
To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, you can visit: <http://survey.HARCdata.org>

### **About HARC**

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at [www.HARCdata.org](http://www.HARCdata.org)

*EDITORS: The month of August is recognized as National Breastfeeding Month, a month dedicated to raising awareness about the benefits that breastfeeding can have not only for infants but also for mothers. Considering that breastfeeding can impact the health of infants and their mothers, and can also reduce medical spending costs, the topic merits a closer look. **In this Press Release, we provide Coachella Valley level statistics, health benefits, and guidelines for breastfeeding.***

### Child was Ever Breastfed



### Age at Which Child Stopped Breastfeeding

