



**Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene**

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Dear Health Care Professional:

Breastfeeding confers unique health benefits to infants and mothers. If possible, every new mother should breastfeed her baby exclusively for the first six months – and continue to breastfeed while adding supplementary foods during the second six months. In New York City, nearly 85% of new mothers initiate breastfeeding, but only 64% continue for eight weeks or more – and only 32% breastfeed exclusively for eight weeks or more.

Health care providers play a critical role in promoting breastfeeding. The Health Department has developed this Breastfeeding Action Kit to support you in that effort. It includes a wealth of clinical tools, as well as provider resources and patient education materials.

Your counseling and support efforts should start while the patient is pregnant, and continue through the neonatal period and beyond. Within the first hour of delivery – ideally 30 minutes – obstetric providers should place the baby in direct skin-to-skin contact with the mother to encourage breastfeeding. In addition, we urge any provider working with newborns to:

- **Encourage and prescribe “exclusive breastfeeding with no supplementation” immediately following birth.**
- **Schedule a newborn visit 3-5 days after birth to assess and support breastfeeding.**
- **Routinely reinforce the importance of exclusive breastfeeding.**
- **Remove formula manufacturers’ samples and educational materials from your office. Display only materials from non-commercial sources.**
- **Know the breastfeeding resources in your community and encourage your patients to use them.**

The materials in this action kit describe the essential role that obstetric and pediatric providers play in promoting breastfeeding. Your Health Department representative will offer tips on how to integrate them into your practice. Your efforts to support breastfeeding can help make it the norm in our city. Thank you for your dedication to the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Farley".

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner