Supporting mothers to breastfeed longer

‘Breastfeed for good health that lasts a lifetime’ – that’s the message Sydney Local Health District will display across facilities to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August, 2013), and support mothers and families to continue breastfeeding for longer.

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Clinical Midwife Consultant, Lactation and Parenting, Carmel Kelly, said breastfeeding was the ideal way to feed an infant.

“Babies who are not exclusively breastfed in their first six months are at more risk of developing chronic and acute diseases, such as ear infections, asthma, SIDS, obesity and respiratory illnesses,” Ms Kelly said.

“Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding with a decreased risk for breast and ovarian cancers, as well as reduced risk of developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease in later life.

“The longer the baby continues to breastfeed – the less the risk of illness for both baby and mother. The World Health Organisation recommends breastfeeding for two years and beyond, as long as both mother and baby are happy for health benefits that last.

“Despite most mothers wanting to breastfeed, many are met with multiple and complex barriers that keep them from achieving their personal breastfeeding goals. Providing a supportive environment for mothers and their families is one way we can encourage mothers to breastfeed for longer and reap the health benefits,” she said.

Sydney Local Health District supports women to breastfeed in a number of ways. Each week the Child and Family Health Service conducts breastfeeding support clinics for women experiencing breastfeeding difficulties, and peer support counselling is encouraged through partnering with the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

The District also promotes breastfeeding through the Breastfeeding and Employment Policy, which allows paid lactation breaks during the work day, and ensures rooms are available for breastfeeding and/or expressing breastmilk in all work locations.

District staff member, Elissa Kiggins has returned to work six months after giving birth to her second son, Zach, and is continuing to breastfeed him as he nears the age of 12 months.

“Thankfully, I have the support of my husband, workplace, colleagues and our childcare centre so that Zach can receive (expressed) breastmilk when at day care,” Mrs Kiggins said.

For more information on breastfeeding, visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/. For media enquiries, or to interview Carmel Kelly and Elissa Kiggins, please contact Caline Haddad from Sydney Local Health District on 9515 9607 or caline.haddad@sswhs.nsw.gov.au