



AN AFFILIATE OF HOSPITAL SISTERS HEALTH SYSTEM

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Contact: Erica Smith, Public Relations
217-544-6464 ext. 44307

BREASTFEEDING HELPS PREVENT HEART DISEASE IN MOMS AND BABIES

(Springfield, IL)—February is Heart Health Awareness month, and St. John's Birth Center reminds everyone that breastfeeding a baby is not only good for the infant, but also the mother. Breastfeeding has been linked to reducing the risk of developing heart disease among breastfeeding mothers and their infants.

"Mothers who breastfeed are not only doing what is best for their infants, but also what is best for their own heart health," said Janet Tolley, RN, Lactation Facilitator at St. John's. "Breastfeeding reduces the risk of several problems associated with heart disease such as obesity and diabetes."

Here are some ways in which breastfeeding can reduce you and your child's risk of heart disease:

- Pregnancy can increase cholesterol levels in women—this increase can be offset by breastfeeding.
- Breastfed babies have lower cholesterol levels than formula-fed babies.
- Breastfeeding reduces a child's risk of obesity, diabetes, respiratory and ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- The longer a mother breastfeeds the better. The American Pediatric Association recommends infants receive only breast milk for the first six months of life, and to continue breastfeeding to one year.

St. John's was the first hospital in Illinois to earn the Baby Friendly designation. For more information about the Birth Center at St. John's Hospital, please contact Erica Smith at 217-544-6464 ext. 44307.

ABOUT HOSPITAL SISTERS HEALTH SYSTEM

Hospital Sisters Health System is a Roman Catholic health care mission founded to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Sponsored by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care framed in traditional values taught by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. It is dedicated to serving all people, including the poor and the needy, at each of its 13 Local Systems in Illinois (Belleville, Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Highland, Litchfield, Springfield and Streator) and in Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Sheboygan and two in Green Bay). For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org.

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