

Breastfeeding Statistics - Tasmania 2008

Fact Sheet

National Breastfeeding Recommendations

Breastfeeding has many health benefits for both the mother and child. The National Health and Medical Research Council make the following recommendations in relation to breastfeeding objectives for Australia¹:

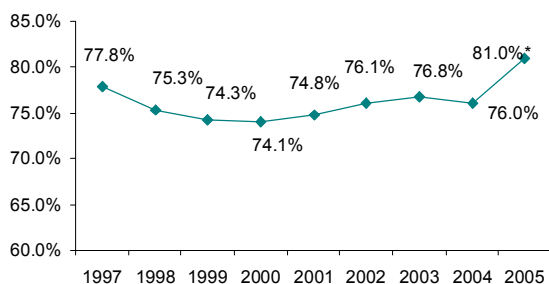
Encourage, support and promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. An initiation rate in excess of 90 per cent and 80 per cent of infants being breastfed at the age of six months.

It is further recommended that mothers then continue breastfeeding until 12 months of age - and beyond if both mother and infant wish.

Breastfeeding Initiation

In Tasmania around 80 per cent of women leave hospital breastfeeding, or intending to breastfeed. While these initiation (start-up) rates are quite good, compared to other countries, they do fall short of Australia's target of 90 per cent of women leaving hospital breastfeeding.

Percentage of Newborn Babies being Breastfed on Discharge from Hospital, Tasmania, 1997-2005



Council of Obstetrics and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity, Annual Report 2005; *prior to 2005 collected as breastfeeding yes/no, 2005 collected as 'intending to breastfeed' yes/no/unsure

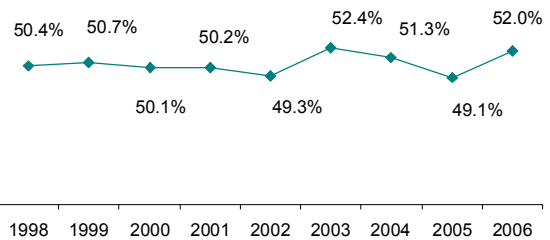
Breastfeeding Duration

Many women stop breastfeeding in the period shortly after discharge from hospital and in the following months.

In Tasmania, during 2006, the number of women still breastfeeding (at least partially) at six months was estimated to be 52 per cent. This is based on data collected by the Child Health and Parenting Service (CHAPS), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

¹ Bins C and Davidson G. *Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers In Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents*. Canberra: NHMRC, 2003.p287-288

Percentage of Mothers still Breastfeeding* at 6 Months, Tasmania, 1998-2006



DHHS, Child Health and Parenting Service (CHAPS); *exclusive, predominant or complimentary breastfeeding

Note: Data Limitations:

The results are potentially biased as only two thirds to three quarters of babies attend a six month visit with CHAPS; non-breastfeeding mothers may be less likely to attend routine checks.

Breastfeeding status is recorded at the time of visit which may not exactly coincide with six months of age. Therefore variation exists in the age at which breastfeeding status is recorded.

Data collection is paper based with the potential for translation errors and record loss.

Data from the Child Health and Parenting Service (CHAPS) over the past ten years consistently suggests that only around 50 per cent of infants were still being breastfed when they presented for their six month check. This is well below the recommendation that 80 per cent of infants are still breastfed at six months of age.

It is difficult to accurately assess the breastfeeding rates throughout Australia, as currently there is no national collection of the statistics. Data from the 1995 National Health Survey show that Tasmanian breastfeeding rates were consistent with the national average. Although when compared on a state-by-state basis, Tasmanian breastfeeding rates were marginally lower than all other states and territories.²

Further information on breastfeeding is available from the Tasmanian Breastfeeding Coalition:

<http://www.breastfeedingtas.org/>

² Donath S and Amir, LH. Rates of breastfeeding in Australia by State and socio-economic status: Evidence from the 1995 National Health Survey. *J. Paediatr. Child Health*. 2000; **36**: 164-168.