

# Media Release

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## **Breast is best**

Lactation consultant Aani Sherwin knows all the reasons why mums should exclusively breastfeed for at least six months and spends her working life educating others and helping mums.

Aani Sherwin was the first Maori midwife lactation consultant in New Zealand and is based at the maternity unit at Tauranga Hospital.

“Breastfeeding is not that easy,” says Aani. “My job is to make sure that midwives, doctors and paediatricians understand the importance of breastfeeding and have the knowledge and skills to positively influence mums in their care.”

Aani is on call for mums who are having problems with breastfeeding.

“One of the most common reasons mums give up is when they leave the hospital environment and speak to friends and family who are not supportive. A friend may say “Just give them a bottle tonight and they will probably sleep through”. This is really unhelpful because as soon as formula is introduced it interferes with the baby’s gut lining and the benefits of exclusively breastfeeding are lost.”

Aani says that it’s very important for mums and their partners and family to be prepared.

“You have to be prepared for sleepless nights. But with the right help and support from family and whanau, mum can sleep during the day and be led by when the baby needs feeding.”

Aani advocates the skin to skin technique to help mums with breastfeeding.

“This is where the baby is placed on the mother’s chest as soon as it is born for at least an hour. It’s a great start to life and helps to create an instant bond. Breastfeeding will often be much easier. Being skin to skin with their mother also allows the baby to absorb maternal pathogens which helps them fight infection and prevent disease later in life.” says Aani.

Even babies born at Tauranga Hospital by caesarean are put skin to skin with their mother straight away to create the important bond.

It is recommended that babies are breastfed exclusively for six months at which time food and other fluids can be introduced along with breastfeeding for up to two years.

### **[sidebar] Why breastfeed your baby exclusively for six months**

#### *For baby*

- Breast milk is nutritionally perfect for baby
- Protects the newborn against infection
- Reduces risk of obesity and diabetes in later life

#### *For Mum*

- Lowers risk of ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and breast cancer
- Faster return to pre-pregnancy figure
- Requires no preparation
- It’s FREE!

World Breastfeeding Week takes place annually from August 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> in over 120 countries. Each year World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) sets a theme, this year it is *Mother Support: Going for the Gold* which shows the support breastfeeding mothers can have from one another, their family and whanau.

Anyone wanting more information on breastfeeding or skin to skin should contact Aani Sherwin on 07 579 8000 and ask for pager number 1128.

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*Lactation consultant Aani Sherwin helps new mum Joanne Stone to breastfeed baby Rua.*

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