

Mothers Look to Breastfeeding Talks

By [Andrea Bernoth](#)

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Mothers who previously provided breastfeeding support for one another as a “hobby” will next week have the opportunity to participate in Moscow’s first-ever conference on breastfeeding.

The conference, titled “Psychology and Counseling on Breastfeeding,” will run for four days next week with a variety of lectures, workshops and discussions from lactation consultants and other specialists.

Lactation consultants — usually mothers but occasionally medical professionals — work to troubleshoot any issues arising during the infant feeding process, such as when a baby refuses to “latch on” or when a mother’s milk isn’t flowing regularly.

The conference is co-sponsored by two Russia-based groups, the Natural Feeding Consultants Association, also known by its Russian acronym AKEV, and Raduga Materinstva, or Rainbow Maternity.

Before this conference, breastfeeding consulting and mothers leading support groups in Russia “was more like a hobby,” said Yekaterina Lokshina, an AKEV consultant and leader of La Leche League in Russia, an international network of mother-to-mother breastfeeding support, adding that this conference was important as the “first conference of its kind ... on such a high level for the topic of breastfeeding.”

The organizations behind the conference advocate the World Health Organization’s recommendation that “breastfeeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development” and should be the sole form of infant nutrition up to six months of age.

U.S. and Russian experts, including Maya Bolman, International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners coordinator for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia, will talk at the conference.

Session topics include a rundown of the latest research presented at the International Lactation Consultant Association summer conference, the practical aspects of consulting in maternity hospitals, as well as Internet and phone counseling, before moving on to more specific issues in breastfeeding and related psychology.

Close to 36 percent of mothers in Russia breastfeed, according to statistics released by the Health and Social Development Ministry and published on AKEV’s web site, and the number is believed to be increasing.

The Soviet government espoused the virtues of breastfeeding, but in recent years there has been less public promotion. A UNICEF report on Russia in 2005 said breastfeeding was an area that needed improving.

“Psychology and Counseling on Breastfeeding” runs Oct. 14 to 17 at the Dukh Vremeni center, 4 Ulitsa Milashenkova. Metro Timiryazevskaya. Cost: 1,500 rubles for a single day, or 4,000 rubles for the entire conference. See www.akev.ru or <http://radugamama.ru>.

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