Breasts for sex or feeding? In U.S. culture, breasts are often represented in the media as sexual objects. Breasts are enhanced, decreased, mutilated, and ridiculed and their actual biological role is underrepresented.

Breastfeeding is a public health issue. Among other public health issues, the media’s representation of health messages (e.g., smoking, unsafe sex, and obesity) plays a large role in influencing the health behaviors of Americans. Instead of the media heavily sexualizing breasts, breasts should be recognized for preventing obesity, diabetes, asthma, cancer, colds, and the flu, and potentially saving the U.S. over $13 billion annually in preventable economic costs.

This presentation focuses on the implications of breastfeeding in the media, and also explores the role of celebrity representations and endorsements of breastfeeding. Combined with the current literature, findings from a survey of over 500 women and suggestions for future media campaigns are discussed.