Breastfeeding: Your Best Choice

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Your Best Choice

Breastfeeding exclusively from birth to 6 months of age is the most beneficial feeding practice for infants. Breast milk is made by you, so it is the best food for your newborn baby. Breastfeeding your baby is also good for you, as a mother, and for the whole family. Breast milk not only provides nutrients required for growth and development, but it also protects the baby from diseases. It is best for parents to learn as much as they can about breastfeeding before giving birth.

Breast milk is good for babies:

• It contains many substances that can protect your baby from illnesses. For example, breastfed babies have fewer ear infections and respiratory problems.
• Breast milk can reduce the amount of colic, spitting up, diarrhea and constipation.
• Breast milk is easy to digest. Nutrients are easily absorbed.
• Breastfed babies are less likely to have allergies.
• Breastfed babies are more likely to self-regulate food intake and therefore less likely to be overweight.
• Breastfeeding reduces the incidence of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.
• Breastfeeding can promote good jaw and tooth growth.
• Breastfeeding enhances bonding between you and your baby.

Breastfeeding is good for mothers:

• Breastfeeding protects against some types of cancers.
• It helps with an earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight.
• Long-term breastfeeding can reduce the risk of maternal hypertension and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Other benefits of breastfeeding:

• It saves money at the grocery store. A breastfeeding mother needs 300 extra calories a day, which adds little to the family food budget. If a mother needs a breast pump and bottles for feeding, the total cost of breastfeeding for a year is about $350. Formula feeding costs about $1,200–$2,000 a year.
• It saves money in healthcare costs. Mothers who breastfeed miss less days from work to take care of a sick child.
• Breastfeeding can save time. You do not have to prepare and clean bottles. You do not have to leave the house to buy formula.

Infant formula producers have been trying to make formulas similar to breast milk, but many qualities and benefits of breast milk are impossible to reproduce. Consider making breastfeeding your first choice.
Resources

