



BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING



There are many benefits to breastfeeding. Even if you are able to do it for only a short time, your baby's immune system can benefit from breast milk. Here are many other benefits of breast milk for a mother, her baby, and others:

BENEFITS FOR BABY:

- Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants. A mother's milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein that is needed for a baby's growth and development. Most babies find it easier to digest breast milk than they do formula.
- As a result, breastfed infants grow exactly the way they should. They tend to gain less unnecessary weight and to be leaner. This may result in being less overweight later in life.
- Premature babies do better when breastfed compared to premature babies who are fed formula.
- Breastfed babies score slightly higher on IQ tests, especially babies who were born pre-maturely.

BENEFITS FOR MOM:

- Nursing uses up extra calories, making it easier to lose the pounds of pregnancy. It also helps the uterus to get back to its original size and lessens any bleeding a woman may have after giving birth.
- Breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding (no supplementing with formula), delays the return of normal ovulation and menstrual

Health Risks of Not Breastfeeding

- Breast milk has agents (called [antibodies](#)) in it to help protect infants from bacteria and viruses. Recent studies show that babies who are not exclusively breastfed for 6 months are more likely to develop a wide range of infectious diseases including ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory illnesses and have more hospitalizations. Also, infants who are not breastfed have a 21% higher postneonatal infant mortality rate in the U.S.
- Some studies suggest that infants who are not breastfed have higher rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in the first year of life, and higher rates of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, lymphoma, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, overweight and obesity, high cholesterol and asthma. More research in these areas is needed (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2005).

cycles. (However, you should still talk with your doctor or nurse about birth control choices.)

- Breastfeeding lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, and possibly the risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis after menopause.
- Breastfeeding makes your life easier. It saves time and money. You do not have to purchase, measure, and mix formula. There are no bottles to warm in the middle of the night!
- A mother can give her baby immediate satisfaction by providing her breast milk when her baby is hungry.
- Breastfeeding requires a mother to take some quiet relaxed time for herself and her baby.
- Breastfeeding can help a mother to bond with her baby. Physical contact is important to newborns and can help them feel more secure, warm and comforted.
- Breastfeeding mothers may have increased self-confidence and feelings of closeness and bonding with their infants.

- Babies who are not breastfed are sick more often and have more doctor's visits.
- Also, when you breastfeed, there are no bottles and nipples to sterilize. Unlike human milk straight from the breast, infant formula has a chance of being contaminated.

BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY:




- Breastfeeding saves on health care costs. Total medical care costs for the nation are lower for fully breastfed infants than never-breastfed infants since breastfed infants typically need fewer sick care visits, prescriptions, and hospitalizations.
- Breastfeeding contributes to a more productive workforce. Breastfeeding mothers miss less work, as their infants are sick less often. Employer medical costs also are lower and employee productivity is higher.
- Breastfeeding is better for our environment because there is less trash and plastic waste compared to that produced by formula cans and bottle supplies.

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The following publications and organizations provide more information on the benefits of breastfeeding:

Publications





1. [A Well-Kept Secret- Breastfeeding's Benefits to Mothers \(Copyright © LLLI\)](http://www.lalecheleague.org/NB/NBJulAug01p124.html)
<http://www.lalecheleague.org/NB/NBJulAug01p124.html>
This publication contains information on the benefits of breastfeeding for the baby and the mother. It includes information on physiologic effects and long-term benefits.
2. [Benefits of Breastfeeding \(Copyright © Linkages Project\)](http://www.linkagesproject.org/technical/bf_benefits.php)
http://www.linkagesproject.org/technical/bf_benefits.php
This fact sheet briefly describes the different health benefits that breastfeeding has on mothers and babies.
3. [Benefits of Breastfeeding \(Copyright © United States Breastfeeding Committee\)](http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/Issue-Papers/Benefits.pdf)
<http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/Issue-Papers/Benefits.pdf>
This booklet explains the health and emotional benefits that breastfeeding has on mothers and children. It also gives information on the environmental and economic benefits of breastfeeding.

4.  [Breast Milk](#)
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002451.htm>
This publication contains information on breast milk. It explains why it is better than cow milk, how breast milk is produced, how to establish, maintain or increase your milk supply, and how to store it.
5. [Breast-feeding and Bottle-feeding \(Copyright © Kids Health\)](#)
http://www.kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=20051&article_set=22567
This publication contains information on the benefits of breastfeeding, the pros and cons of bottle-feeding, instructions on how to breastfeed or bottle-feed your baby, as well as answers to common breastfeeding questions.
6. [Can Breastfeeding Prevent Illnesses? \(Copyright © LLLI\)](#)
<http://www.la lecheleague.org/FAQ/prevention.html>
This publication contains information on how breastfeeding can prevent some illnesses in your baby.
7.  [Close to the Heart: Breastfeeding Our Children, Honoring Our Values](#)
http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/close_to_the_heart.pdf
This publication contains information on why breastfeeding is important, benefits of breastfeeding, and how breastfeeding is a value held by Native American women.
8. [Economic Benefits of Breastfeeding \(Copyright © United States Breastfeeding Committee\)](#)
<http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/Issue-Papers/Economics.pdf>
This publication explains the medical and economic costs of not breastfeeding, and it has information on the non-medical costs of artificial feeding.
9.  [Feeding Baby with Breast Milk or Formula](#)
<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/feedbby.html>
This brochure helps parents decide on the way to feed their baby. Breastfeeding is the best, but if it's not possible, there are helpful tips for using formula.
10. [Feeding Your Newborn \(Copyright © Kids Health\)](#)
<http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/food/infants/feednewborn.html>
This publication contains information on breastfeeding or bottle-feeding your baby, the advantages of breastfeeding, limitations of both, and possible challenges.
11. [Got Mom... \(Copyright © ACNM\)](#)
<http://www.gotmom.org/>
GotMom.org was created by the American College of Nurse-Midwives to provide breastfeeding information and resources for mothers and families. It contains information on why breast milk is best, dispels common misunderstandings about breastfeeding, and it provides a list of resources that can help women and families with breastfeeding, information for employers, and links to the latest research findings.
12. [Mama's Baby: Happy, Healthy and Breastfed \(Copyright © Black Women's Health Imperative\)](#)
<http://www.blackwomenshealth.org/breastfeeding>
This site encourages women to learn about the benefits of breastfeeding. It also addresses the barriers to breastfeeding that women often face and gives tips for overcoming these barriers and having a successful breastfeeding relationship.
13. [The Comprehensive Benefits of Breastfeeding \(Copyright © ACNM\)](#)
<http://www.gotmom.org/best/benefits.htm>
This publication lists the beneficial effects that breastfeeding has on mothers, babies, and society.
14. [What are the Benefits of Breastfeeding my Toddler? \(Copyright © La Leche League International\)](#)

<http://www.la lecheleague.org/FAQ/advantagetoddler.html>

This publication describes how breastfeeding your toddler can help their ability to mature and their understanding of discipline as well as provide protection from illness and allergies.

Organizations

1. [African-American Breastfeeding Alliance](http://www.aabaonline.com/)
<http://www.aabaonline.com/>
2. [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://www.aap.org/)
<http://www.aap.org/>
3. [American College of Nurse-Midwives](http://www.midwife.org/)
<http://www.midwife.org/>
4. [Breastfeeding Basics](http://www.breastfeedingbasics.org/)
<http://www.breastfeedingbasics.org/>
5. [Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre](http://www.bflrc.com/)
<http://www.bflrc.com/>
6. [International Lactation Consultant Association \(ILCA\)](http://www.ilca.org/)
<http://www.ilca.org/>
7. [Kids Health](http://www.kidshealth.org)
<http://www.kidshealth.org>
8. [La Leche League International](http://www.la lecheleague.org/)
<http://www.la lecheleague.org/>
9. [Linkages Project](http://www.linkagesproject.org/)
<http://www.linkagesproject.org/>
10.  [Maternal and Child Health Bureau, HRSA, HHS](http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/)
<http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/>
11.  [National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, MCHB, HRSA, HHS](http://www.ncemch.org/)
<http://www.ncemch.org/>
12. [National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition](http://www.hmhb.org/index.html)
<http://www.hmhb.org/index.html>
13.  [National Women's Health Information Center, OWH, HHS](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
<http://www.womenshealth.gov>
14.  [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, \(WIC\) USDA](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/)
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>
15. [World Alliance For Breastfeeding Action](http://www.waba.org.my/)
<http://www.waba.org.my/>

 = Indicates Federal Resources