



Breastfeeding The Benefits and the Basics

Goals:

- *Participants will learn the benefits of breastfeeding for both Mother and Infant*
- *Participants will understand the unique aspects of breast milk that make it important from day 1*
- *Participants will learn tips to help facilitate breastfeeding and thus increase the number of months or weeks they breastfeed.*

Audience: Prenatal

Suggested Nurture Recipes:

- Energizing Trail Mix
- Chicken Taco: rice cooker

Today we are going to talk about the benefits of breastfeeding for both Mother and her baby. We will also talk about the unique qualities of breast milk that make it so beneficial to baby. Finally, we will present some tips to help make breastfeeding easier and more effective for the mother and baby.

First, here are a couple facts about breastfeeding:

- Breast milk is the **best** source of nutrition for growth and development of an infant.
- Breastfeeding saves money:
 - 3.6 billion could be saved in health care costs if breastfeeding rates were increased to the current recommendations of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and continued feeding (along with supplemental foods) until the infant is 1 year old. If all women in WIC breastfed for even 1 month, it would save \$30 million in health care costs.
 - Buying baby formula for 6 months costs \$600.00 or more.

What are the benefits of breastfeeding to Mom?

- Strengthens bond with the infant
- Breastfeeding saves the mother time and money: Infant formula costs roughly \$25 per container. Depending on the baby's age, she may need almost 2 containers of formula per week. This is a cost of over \$100/month. Cleaning baby bottles takes time and energy that new moms often don't have. Breastfeeding is free and little or no bottles are required.
- Promotes faster shrinking of the uterus and a faster return to pre pregnancy weight
- Reduces postpartum bleeding and delays the return of the menstrual cycle thus delaying fertility
- Decreases risk of breast and ovarian cancers, improves bone density and reduces the risk for hip fracture
- Decreases risk for postpartum depression
- Reduces risk for type 2 diabetes

What are the benefits of breastfeeding to the infant?

- Provides optimal nutrition and is easiest for the baby to digest
- Meets both fluid and food requirements for the first 6 months

- Contains enzymes (that formula doesn't have) to help digest fats
- Contains carbohydrates that protect against harmful bacteria
- Enhances the immune system protecting against diseases and infections
- Protects against lower respiratory infection, ear infections, gastrointestinal diseases and many others
- Decreases risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life
- Protects against seasonal and food allergies and intolerances
- Decreases diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, and wheezing
- Promotes correct development of jaws, teeth, and speech patterns
- Decreases risk of childhood obesity
- Increases cognitive function
- Increases bonding with mother

*All of these benefits are magnified with exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, and continued breastfeeding through the first year of life.

Breastfeeding Basics: Tips to help you stick with it!

- When baby is first born, mom produces milk called colostrum for the first 3-7 days. Colostrum contains important proteins that develop and strengthen the baby's immune system and probiotics and growth factor to help with healthy development of the baby's immature gut.
- An infant's first stool (poop) is thick and tarry, called meconium. Breast milk has laxative properties to help the infant pass this, while formula-fed babies tend to become constipated.
- Over time, the composition of breast milk changes to suit the infant's increased need of many nutrients.
- **It is important to breastfeed frequently in the first few weeks and months to establish a sufficient supply of breast milk.**
- Breastfed **newborns need to nurse on average eight to twelve times in 24 hours** in order to get enough milk. This may mean nursing every 2 hours or even more frequently at some times of the day and slightly less frequently other times of the day.
- To meet her baby's nutritional and sucking needs, the mother will ideally **watch the baby and not the clock** which means breastfeeding him on cue.
- It is important that the baby be allowed to **finish the first breast first before the mother offers the second so he will get the proper balance of fluid and calories.** The foremilk that comes first is high in volume (fluid) and the hind milk that comes after a few minutes of nursing is higher in the fat and calories that the baby needs.
- During the first 6 weeks or so, babies should have at least **six wet diapers and at least 3 stools daily** if they are getting enough milk.
- Most breastfeeding mothers can eat any food in moderation without it having an effect on the baby. Some babies however may be sensitive to the foods her mother eats, especially if there is a family history of food allergies. Ask your doctor if your baby seems overly fussy, develops a rash, is having sleep disturbances or trouble breathing or if you notice blood in her stool.
 - Cow's milk is the most common food to cause fussiness and sensitivity in a breastfed baby, but most babies can tolerate it when the mother drinks milk without any problem. Ask your baby's pediatrician if you think she is affected by the foods you eat. Some believe that spicy foods can make the baby fussy. If you're eating spice in moderation, it shouldn't be a problem, but if you notice a change in your baby after you eat something, try to cut back and see how she reacts.

- The flavors of the foods you eat while pregnant and breastfeeding are passed to the baby. It's important to eat a variety of nutritious foods so that your baby develops a taste for these healthy flavors when he's ready to start solids.
- Try to be relaxed and in a calm environment when breastfeeding. If you're anxious, upset or stressed, your milk may not flow well. The baby may also sense this and may not feed well.

Resources: The American Academy of Pediatrics