

Benefits of Breastfeeding

(Adapted from the 2005 Policy Statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics,



Breastfeeding is the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants and is primary in achieving optimal infant and child health, growth, and development. Human milk is the preferred feeding for all infants, including premature and sick newborns, with rare exceptions. When direct breastfeeding is not possible, expressed human milk, fortified when necessary for the premature infant, should be provided.

Benefits for Babies

- Decreases the incidence and/or severity of diarrhea, lower respiratory infection, otitis media, bacteremia, bacterial meningitis, botulism, urinary tract infection, and necrotizing enterocolitis.
- Possible protective effect against sudden infant death syndrome, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, lymphoma, allergic diseases, and other chronic digestive diseases, lymphoma, leukemia, and Hodgkin disease, overweight and obesity, hypercholesterolemia, and asthma in older children and adults who were breastfed.
- Breastfeeding during a painful procedure such as a heel-stick for newborn screening provides analgesia to infants

Benefits For Mothers.

- Increases levels of oxytocin, resulting in less postpartum bleeding and more rapid uterine involution.
- Decreased menstrual blood loss and increased child spacing attributable to lactational amenorrhea,
- Earlier return to prepregnancy weight,
- Decreased risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and possibly decreased risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis in the postmenopausal period.

Social And Economic Benefits

- Reduced health care costs.
- Reduced employee absenteeism for care attributable to child illness.
- Less illness in breastfed infants allows parents more time for attention to siblings and other family duties and reduces parental absence from work and lost income.
- Reduced costs for food for the first year after birth
- Decreased environmental burden for disposal of formula cans and bottles; and decreased energy demands for production and transport of artificial feeding products