

# The Benefits of Breastfeeding

*Babies are born to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is a gift only you can give.  
The benefits last a lifetime.*

## For your baby:

- Just as you are nourishing your baby while he is in the womb, breastfeeding will nourish him after he is born.
- Breastfeeding will give your baby all the nutrition and growth factors needed to grow, as well as lifelong protection from many diseases.
- Breastmilk is a living fluid. It contains antibodies and many other biological defenses against human illness.
- Babies fed formula have a higher risk of developing allergies and diabetes. This might be caused by exposure to the protein in cow's milk when the baby's gut is still immature.
- Formula is harder for babies to digest.
- Breastfeeding will help protect your baby from obesity, even into adulthood.
- Babies who are breastfed have higher intelligence scores.
- Nursing is comforting. It meets the emotional needs of babies, helping to form a strong loving connection between mother and child.



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## For yourself:

- Women who breastfeed have less breast and ovarian cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, heart attacks and high blood pressure.
- The longer a mother breastfeeds, the more she benefits.
- If you breastfeed, you will return to your pre-pregnant weight more quickly.
- You will experience less bleeding after birth, and your uterus will return to its normal size faster if you nurse your baby.
- Hormones released during nursing will make you feel more relaxed, calmer and help you sleep more deeply.

## Breastfeeding saves time and money:

- Formula costs around \$120-\$150 per month, while breastfeeding is free.
- The average baby drinks 285 quarts of milk in its 1<sup>st</sup> year of life. WIC does not supply all the formula that babies need.
- When you breastfeed there is nothing to measure, mix, wash or prepare.
- Using formula makes more trash to dispose of in our environment.

*Many women have expressed the view that "breastfeeding is one of life's sweetest pleasures"*

## **Breastfeeding will give your baby the best nutrition and provide comfort at the same time.**

Breastmilk contains everything your baby needs to grow and develop the healthiest body possible. Your breastmilk will change as your baby grows to give her the nutrition she needs! Since the nutrients come from a human source, they will perfectly match your baby's digestion, digesting rapidly and easily.

Breastfeeding provides babies the contentment of frequent close contact with their mothers and the comfort of suckling. Breastfeeding decreases stress hormones in moms and babies, making them feel more relaxed and happy. It also stimulates the release of the “mothering” hormones (*oxytocin* and *prolactin*) speeding along feelings of love and attachment.

## **Breastfeeding will protect your baby from getting sick.**

Antibodies from mothers are passed to their babies through breastmilk. Therefore, breastfed babies have higher resistance to viral infections (such as colds, flu, diarrhea and ear infections) and to other more serious bacterial infections. Formula cannot provide this protection, as it does not contain any human antibodies. Because of the special properties of breastmilk (which cannot be duplicated) breastfeeding will decrease the chance of your baby developing allergies, diabetes, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, multiple sclerosis and heart disease later in life. Breastfeeding also reduces the incidence of some childhood cancers, such as lymphomas. And it reduces the chance of SIDS.

## **Breastfeeding will promote your baby's growth and development.**

Human milk contains enzymes and hormones which help babies' digestion, and promote healthy growth. It also contains important fats (omega-3 & omega-6 fatty acids) that will help your baby's brain to grow. Feeding your baby only breastmilk will give his brain and visual development an extra boost.

The milk of mothers whose infants are born prematurely has more protein and other nutrients specially designed to meet the needs of premature babies.

The activity of suckling at the breast promotes the natural development of the muscles in your baby's mouth and facial bones that foster normal speech development.

## **Breastfeeding will save you time and money.**

Once you and your baby become confident at breastfeeding (usually by the second week) it becomes much easier and takes a lot less time than bottle feeding. It is much more trouble to have to buy and mix formula, and to wash and prepare bottles. Breastmilk is always warm, fresh and ready to feed!

Formula costs at least \$1,700 a year, and that does not include supplies. Since breastfed babies get sick less often, you should count on less time and money spent on doctor visits and less on medicines. And if you are working outside the home, you are less likely to have to take time off to care for a sick baby.

## **And don't forget that YOU will be healthier - now and well into the future.**

Your body was designed to breastfeed. So you benefit when you nurse your baby, as nature intended, with less bleeding and quicker weight loss. But research also shows that you will benefit from protection against many very serious health problems, such as breast and ovarian cancer, heart attacks, diabetes, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, long-term obesity and high blood pressure. And the longer you breastfeed, the greater the protection.