

The Importance of Breastfeeding

Exclusive and sustained breastfeeding and the use of human milk when breastfeeding is not possible, is the normal way to nurture all children including premature and sick newborns from birth to two years of age and beyond.

Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, 2011

Experts recommend that babies be given only breast milk for 6 months. Healthy solid foods are started at 6 months with breast milk staying in the diet for two years and longer.

Breast milk is good for mothers and their babies. Breast milk has nutrients that cannot be replaced by formula or other foods.

**Breastfeeding is important:
It is good food and good medicine.**

For baby:

Babies who are breastfed have fewer and less severe:

- chest infections
- ear infections
- stomach and bowel upsets
- allergies
- urinary tract infections
- serious infection in the blood and bowels (sepsis & necrotizing enterocolitis)
- meningitis

Babies who are breastfed are less likely to have:

- diabetes
- crib death (SIDS)
- obesity
- certain childhood cancers
- ongoing bowel problems (Crohn's & celiac disease)
- higher blood pressure

For mother:

Mothers who breastfeed their babies have:

- less bleeding right after birth
- an earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight
- less chance of breast, ovarian & endometrial cancer
- less chance of diabetes
- less chance of hip fractures and weak bones (osteoporosis) later in life
- more opportunity to bond and enjoy their baby

Other benefits:

- reduced health care costs
- healthier baby - easier to take care of
- healthier baby - less missed work time
- cheaper - breast milk is free, formula is expensive
- environmentally friendly - less waste