

Benefits of Exclusive Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is when a mother feeds her child milk that develops in her breast, and is a process that begins within minutes of birth and can continue for years.

There has been some controversy in recent years about a move away from breast milk, and the rise of artificial formula has helped that trend grow. However, there have been many studies regarding the health benefits of breastfeeding, and it's estimated that more than 1 million infant deaths each year could be prevented through more widespread awareness and practice of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding can be started immediately after delivery or after 4-5 hours of a Cesarean section procedure. The milk that comes out initially is slightly thick and yellowish in color and acts as a vaccine. Mother's milk should be the only source of diet for the infant during the first 6 months. No other supplementary vitamins or juice can replace it in terms of an ideal diet. Breastfeeding can be done for two years or more. It not only provides nourishment to the child, but also gives relief to the mother's pain after her delivery. Normally, the infants should be breastfed 10 to 12 times per day with an average of 12 to 14 minutes on either breast.

Except for certain cases, it is good to feed the infant with mother's milk. During these situations or diseased conditions, like a mother having active tuberculosis, HIV infection, or if a mother takes illegal drugs, then she should not breastfeed her infant. Also, an infant suffering from galactosemia must not be fed with mother's milk.

Breastfeeding occurs in drastically different concentrations around the world, with 75% of women in the United States breastfeeding for at least six months, while in many other parts of the world, that number drops to below 40%. Breastfeeding has been proven to benefit both the mother and the baby, and

should therefore be seriously considered as a part of your early motherhood months. Even the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends six months of breastfeeding for mothers who are healthy and able to produce enough milk. Now, let's dig a little deeper into the many benefits of breastfeeding.

The benefits of Breastfeeding for Infants

1. Improve Immunity

It is well known that the constant flow of beneficial nutrients coming from breast milk is accompanied by important antibodies from a baby's mother. When you are an infant, you're highly susceptible to falling ill, and there are often complications. Breastfeeding provides a strong first line of defense against infant illness and mortality. In fact, children who are breastfed had a lower risk of asthma, respiratory illnesses, stomach disorders, and allergies, so the effects of breastfeeding can last long into their adult life. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, milk present in mother's milk forms a layer over the baby's throat and nose, thereby preventing them from ear and asthma infections.

2. Prevent Chronic Disease

Some of the most interesting claims in recent years have related to the occurrence of asthma and obesity in children who were breastfed. The research on this correlation is still relatively new, but the early results are encouraging, adding one more long-term reason for breastfeeding your child at least past the six-month mark.

3. Boosting Gastrointestinal Immunity

Breast milk protects the baby from gastrointestinal diseases by enhancing the immune system of the Gastrointestinal Tract (GIT).

4. Ensure Proper Growth

The custom-made mixture of nutrients and minerals in breast milk is perfect for your child. With a rich amount of vitamins, antibodies, protein, and fat, breastfeeding is the best way to ensure that your baby is getting the right amount and concentration of nutrients. Mother's diet also has an effect on the quality of the milk, which can encourage mothers to eat healthy and conscientiously throughout those postpartum months, if a mother is thoughtful and considerate of her baby's welfare, this aspect of anatomy can be a major advantage for growth.

5. Increase Cognitive Abilities

Studies have connected breastfeeding with higher scores on IQ tests later in life and a general increase in cognitive abilities as children grow up. This is another slightly controversial claim, but it certainly doesn't do any harm to cognition and mental development. The closeness and intimacy, as well as the frequent experience of physical contact, will help the baby develop emotional connections as well, helping their social interactivity later in life.

6. Lower SIDS Risk

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is a tragic and thus far mysterious condition that kills thousands of infants each year. As high as a 50% reduction in SIDS occurrences have been reported by mothers who breastfeed as opposed to those who don't.

The benefits of Breastfeeding for Mothers

1. Lose Pregnancy Weight

When you breastfeed, the babies are literally sucking the nutrients out of your body, and a great deal of that is in the form of fat and protein. You end up burning quite a few calories just from breastfeeding, and it has been known to speed up the metabolism, an ideal situation for women trying to lose their baby weight in those first few postpartum months.

2. Prevent Breast Cancer

Breast cancer occurrence has been directly negatively correlated to breastfeeding, and it significantly affected by your total lifetime breastfeeding time. More specifically, the longer the amount of time you spend breastfeeding your children, the lower your chances of developing breast cancer. This finding has been corroborated in a number of studies around the world.

3. Reduce Uterine Bleeding

One of the hormones released when lactating is oxytocin, which can help protect the uterus and return it to its pre-delivery size and condition. Excess bleeding can often lead to postpartum complications, and even increase your chances of developing uterine or ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding can successfully lessen those risks for mothers.

4. Uterus Contraction

Due to the sucking action of the infant, a hormone is produced in the mother, causing the contraction of her uterus.

5. Promotes Emotional Wellbeing

Postpartum depression can be a dangerous and delicate condition that many mothers will struggle through, but maintaining that physical and nutritional connection to your infant can help develop the bond that has been growing for nine months. You see reduced occurrences of postpartum depression in women who breastfeed their children, as well as lower levels of anxiety and a higher quality of overall emotional health. It is a natural phenomenon that while breast feeding, the baby and mother are tied with each other emotionally. The infant also gains security with his or her mother by being close to her.

6. Reduced Risk of Ovarian Cancer in Mothers:

It is also an established fact that breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer in the mother.

7. Less Blood Loss During Menstruation:

Various studies have reported that lactation causes a reduction in the volume of blood flow during menstrual cycles after delivery. This is advantageous to the mother as she is in a recovering phase after delivery.

8. Reduced Post-Menopausal Hip Fractures:

Some studies have shown that women who feed their babies with breast milk have low chances of hip fractures that occur after menopause.

9. Stronger Bones:

One of the benefits of being pregnant or lactating is that the body increases its ability to uptake calcium. This more efficient means of accessing this important mineral has a long-term effect on a woman's body. In fact, women who breastfeed are 4x less likely to develop osteoporosis as non-breastfeeding mothers.

It has been found in various studies that compared to a baby fed with any other milk, the breastfed infants have increased protection against leukemia, high blood pressure, type I diabetes, and obesity. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, breastfeeding decreases the occurrence of diarrhea, botulism, urinary tract infections, meningitis, and allergic diseases.