

Breast Milk is Best

Breast milk is, by design, the best food for your baby. It contains all the right ingredients in just the right balance to meet your baby's nutritional needs. Breast milk adjusts with your baby's changing needs.

In the first few days the breasts produce a yellowish clear liquid called colostrum. **Colostrum is high in white blood cells and infection-fighting proteins at the most important time – when your baby is new and has built up no antibodies of her own to fight germs.**

It contains the right kind of fats (which are good brain food), beneficial cholesterol, powerful proteins, and 20 to 30 percent more lactose (sugar) than cow's milk. Breast milk contains highly absorbable vitamins, minerals and iron. It also contains constantly adapting disease-fighting white blood cells and immunoglobulins. Any amount of breastfeeding, even if it is for only the first few weeks, benefits your baby greatly.

More Benefits of Breastfeeding

- Your breast milk is always ready. No mixing, no measuring, no warming, no cleanup, and no bottles.
- Nighttime feedings are quick & easy. Sometimes you don't even have to fully wake up to feed your baby.
- Breastfeeding is a natural relaxant. Your milk contains a protein that helps your baby sleep. Your body produces hormones as you breastfeed that allow you to relax as well.
- Breastfeeding helps you feel closer to your baby and increases the bond between you.
- Breastfeeding gets you back into shape quicker. Hormones released during breastfeeding contract your uterus to pre-pregnancy size.
- Breastfeeding contributes to a lower incidence of breast cancer.
- Breastfeeding your baby can make her healthier, which saves money on medical bills.
- Breastfeeding saves you money: there is nothing to buy.

Components of Breast Milk

Fats: *Your milk is custom-made to meet the demands of your baby.* Fats are the most changeable ingredient in your breast milk. The fat content of your milk changes during a feeding, at different times during the day, and as your baby grows. It is ever-changing to fit the caloric needs of your growing baby. Not only do breastfed babies get the right amount of fat, they get the right kinds of fat. Breast milk contains healthy fats and healthy cholesterol that provide vital nutrients necessary for brain, retina, and nervous system development.

Proteins: Proteins are the building blocks of growth. Your breast milk contains two types of protein: whey and casein. Your milk contains **more whey** than **casein** and this special balance allows for easy digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Vitamins: The vitamins in your breast milk are unique because they have a high bioavailability – meaning more of the vitamins are able to be used by your baby's body. These vitamins, like fats in breast milk, change as your baby's growing nutritional needs change.

Carbohydrates: Lactose (sugar) is the primary carbohydrate found in human milk. Lactose helps to decrease the amount of unhealthy bacteria in the stomach and this improves the absorption of calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium. It also helps to fight disease and promotes the growth of healthy bacteria in the stomach.

Your breast milk has the perfect combination of proteins, fats, vitamins, and carbohydrates. There is nothing better for the health of your baby.

Immunization in Breast Milk

Early breast milk gives your baby protection against disease. Breastfed babies experience decreased intestinal issues. Even **leukemia**, the most common childhood cancer, is reduced with breast feeding. ***Breast feeding for the first two months will reduce your baby's risk for SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) in half.*** Studies also indicate that ***breastfeeding has a positive effect on a baby's brain and nervous system development,*** resulting in higher IQ scores and fewer behavior and learning problems as they grow older. Research shows that breastfed babies become healthier adults with lower cholesterol levels, lower rates of diabetes, less Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis, less obesity, one of the leading causes of death in the United States.

Nicer Diapers

Breast milk is gentle to your baby's stomach and very easy to digest. Enzymes in breast milk help more of the nutrients and fats not to be rejected by your baby's intestines. This means there is very little odor to your baby's bowel movements. The odor is similar to buttered popcorn. Breastfed babies have less colic, constipation, and diarrhea.

Babies Prefer Breast Milk

Breast milk tastes fresh. Babies have a natural sweet tooth. Your milk contains more lactose (sugar) than cow's milk, which makes it taste sweeter. This lactose is important for central nervous system development and calcium absorption for bone growth. Lactose also promotes the growth of useful intestinal bacteria to aid in digestion.

The Choice

The World Health Organization recommends infant formula as the last resort for infant feeding. Here's how they rank it. ***Breastfeeding at the mother's breast is obviously the first choice.*** Pumping and giving your baby your own pumped milk in a bottle is a second choice. The third choice for human babies is actually human donor milk from a milk bank or a wet nurse. ***Lastly, fourth and last option is infant formula. Choosing between breast milk or formula is an important decision.*** Choose the best for you and your baby.

Your child at a minimum will need to have either breast milk or formula for the first year of their life. The ***benefits of breast milk continue way beyond the first year.*** They don't stop just because they started eating solid food or had their first birthday.

References and Footnotes:

Information compiled from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, Washington, DC found at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/> and La Leche League International, Chicago, IL, found at: <http://www.llli.org/>, accessed 8-20-2018.