

THE IMPORTANCE OF BREASTFEEDING

An enormous (and still-growing) body of medical research shows that breastfeeding is the best way to feed babies until they are about six months, and continues to provide benefits as a portion of a child's diet through age two. Yet, only about 22% of babies born in America are being breastfed at 4 months. The number of U.S. babies who receive breast milk as part of their diet through age one, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, or through age two, as recommended by the World Health Organization, is tiny. It is important to be informed of the lifelong benefits of breastfeeding.

PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

1. Less cases, and less severe cases, of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections.
2. Higher scores on tests of neurological development.
3. Decreased risk of allergies and less intensity of problems from allergies.
4. Decreased risk of childhood lymphomas.
5. Decreased risk of breast cancer in women who breastfeed and in women who were breastfed as infants.
6. Decreased risk of type I (juvenile, insulin-dependent) diabetes.
7. Decreased risk of adult intestinal disorders (ulcerative colitis, Crohn's).

Women are also empowered by breastfeeding. Providing the perfect food for a baby is one of the unique powers of womanhood. No other international corporation, government, or power structure of any kind can do this!

PERSONAL ADVANTAGES OF BREASTFEEDING

1. Breastfeeding is easier than formula feeding, once the initial period of adjustment is over. Breast milk is always available, clean and pure, the right temperature and composition, and is uniquely suited to each individual baby's changing needs throughout infancy and early childhood.
2. Breastfeeding, by its very nature, requires the sort of skin-to-skin contact that babies need. It is a unique bonding experience.
3. Breastfeeding requires no equipment, unless separation between mother and baby in the early months requires the expression and storing of milk for later use.
4. The bowel movements of an exclusively breastfed child have a very mild, almost sweet odor, and are not at all unpleasant to clean up.
5. Even with the mother working outside the home, expressing breast milk can be more convenient than using formula because a breastfed baby will probably have less frequent and less severe illnesses. Parents can anticipate fewer days off to take care of a sick baby.
6. Breastfeeding can have a significant financial impact on the family. It is estimated that a family will save \$1,400 on formula costs alone, and even more considering healthcare bills may be less for the breastfed infant.