

# Benefits of Breastfeeding

The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breastmilk help protect babies from illness. This protection is unique and changes every day to meet your baby's growing needs.

Research shows that breastfed babies have lower risks of:

- Asthma
- Leukemia (during childhood)
- Obesity (during childhood)
- Ear infections
- Eczema (atopic dermatitis)
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Lower respiratory infections
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Type 2 diabetes

Your breastmilk helps your baby grow healthy and strong from day one.

- **Your first milk is liquid gold.** Called liquid gold for its deep yellow color, colostrum (koh-LOSS-trum) is the thick first milk that you make during pregnancy and just after birth. This milk is very rich in nutrients and includes antibodies to protect your baby from infections.

Colostrum also helps your newborn's digestive system to grow and function. Your baby gets only a small amount of colostrum at each feeding, because the stomach of a newborn infant is tiny and can hold only a small amount.

**Your milk changes as your baby grows.** Colostrum changes into mature milk by the third to fifth day after birth. This mature milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby continue to grow. It looks thinner than colostrum, but it has the nutrients and antibodies your baby needs for healthy growth.

- **Formula can be harder for your baby to digest.** For most babies, especially (babies born before 37 weeks of pregnancy), breastmilk substitutes like formula are harder to digest than breastmilk. Formula is made from cow's milk, and it often takes time for babies' stomachs to adjust to digesting it.
- **Your breastmilk changes to meet your baby's needs.** As your baby gets older, your breastmilk adjusts to meet your baby's changing needs. Researchers think that a baby's saliva transfers chemicals to a mother's body through breastfeeding. These chemicals help a mother's body create breastmilk that meets the baby's changing needs.
- **Life can be easier for you when you breastfeed.** Breastfeeding may seem like it takes a little more effort than formula feeding at first. But breastfeeding can make your life easier once you and your baby settle into a good routine. When you breastfeed, there are no bottles and nipples to sterilize. You do not have to buy,

measure, and mix formula. And there are no bottles to warm in the middle of the night! When you breastfeed, you can satisfy your baby's hunger right away.

- **Not breastfeeding costs money.** Formula and feeding supplies can cost well over \$1,500 each year. As your baby gets older he or she will eat more formula. But breastmilk changes with the baby's needs, and babies usually need the same amount of breastmilk as they get older. Breastfed babies may also be sick less often, which can help keep your baby's health costs lower.
- **Breastfeeding keeps mother and baby close.** Physical contact is important to newborns. It helps them feel more secure, warm, and comforted. Mothers also benefit from this closeness. The skin-to-skin contact boosts your oxytocin (OKS-ee-TOH-suhn) levels. Oxytocin is a hormone that helps breastmilk flow, facilitates bonding and can calm the mother.

### Sometimes, formula feeding can save lives:

- Very rarely, babies are born unable to tolerate milk of any kind. These babies must have an infant formula that is hypoallergenic, dairy free, or lactose free. A wide selection of specialist baby formulas now on the market include soy formula, hydrolyzed formula, lactose-free formula, and hypoallergenic formula.
- Your baby may need formula if you have a health problem that won't allow you to breastfeed and you do not have access to donor breastmilk.

Talk to your doctor before feeding your baby anything besides your breastmilk.

During an emergency, such as a natural disaster, breastfeeding can save your baby's life:

- Breastfeeding protects your baby from the risks of an unclean water supply.
- Breastfeeding can help protect your baby against respiratory illnesses and diarrhea.
- Your milk is always at the right temperature for your baby. It helps to keep your baby's body temperature from dropping too low.
- Your milk is always available without needing other supplies.

Info shared from, visit this website for more info:

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/making-decision-breastfeed>

Moms sharing breastfeeding stories, breastfeeding tips and resources and also text4baby app.

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/blog/category/breastfeeding>