

Breastfeeding Your Baby

Benefits of Breastfeeding to Baby and the Mother

Benefits to baby	Benefits to mother
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk gives your baby the best nutrition: Breast milk has the right combination of nutrients for your baby. These nutrients include protein, fat, sugar, vitamins, and minerals that your baby needs to grow. Colostrum is a special type of milk that is made by your breasts before your mature breast milk comes in. Colostrum is rich in antibodies (proteins that protect your baby's immune system). Breast milk starts to replace colostrum 2 to 4 days after your baby's birth. • Breast milk is safe and easy for your baby to digest & absorb & does not need to be prepared and is fresh and safe to drink. • Breast milk has antibodies and other substances that help protect your baby's immune system & fight off infection. Breastfed babies have a lower risk for allergy problems & can also help protect your baby against ear infections, diarrhea, and lung infections. • Breast milk decreases your baby's risk for certain medical conditions: Breastfed babies may have a lower risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They also have a lower risk of becoming obese or developing diabetes, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding can help you recover faster after delivery, Breastfeeding right after the delivery of your baby helps stop bleeding from your uterus. It also helps shrink your uterus back to the size it was before your pregnancy. You may be able to lose weight by following a healthy diet if you are breastfeeding. This can happen because of the extra calories your body needs to support breastfeeding. • Breastfeeding may decrease your risk of postpartum depression and certain diseases. Breastfeeding may lower your risk of postpartum depression, and breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding also decreases your risk of type 2 diabetes if you did not have gestational diabetes during pregnancy. Breastfeeding can make your bones stronger. This can help prevent osteoporosis and fractures later in life. • Breastfeeding has other benefits. Breastfeeding is special experiences that can help you bond with your baby. Breastfeeding can save you time and money because you do not have to buy and prepare milk.

Can I breastfeed my premature baby?

Some premature babies are not able to eat on their own and need to be fed through a tube. Even if your premature baby cannot feed directly from your breast, he can still be given breast milk. It can be expressed or pumped and then fed to your baby. As your baby grows and develops, he may learn to breastfeed. Express milk once your baby is born so that he can receive antibodies from colostrum. Breast milk is especially good for premature babies who have a very low birthweight. Premature babies are at risk for medical problems because their immune system is not fully formed. The antibodies and nutrients found in colostrum and breast milk can help to protect a premature baby against medical problems. Breast milk helps your baby's eyes, brain, and digestive system develop.

How long should I breastfeed? WHO and UNICEF recommend:

1. early initiation of breastfeeding with one hour of birth;
2. exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life; and

3. the introduction of nutritionally-adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at 6 months together with continued breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond.

Why is it important to give my baby solid foods after he is 6 months old?

- **Your baby has new nutrition needs.** Your baby needs other foods to meet his nutrition needs when he reaches 6 months of age. He needs certain vitamins and minerals, such as iron, to allow for normal growth and development.
- **Your baby learns eating skills.** Your baby will learn to move food in his mouth and chew. He will also learn to hold and use a spoon to feed himself.
- **Your baby learns to try new tastes and textures.** This helps your baby learn to eat a variety of foods from all of the food groups. This will help him get all the nutrients he needs when he is weaned from breast milk or formula.

Key facts

- Under nutrition is associated with 45% of child deaths.
- Globally in 2012, 162 million children under 5 were estimated to be stunted and 51 million have low weight-for-height, mostly as a consequence of poor feeding and repeated infections; 44 million were overweight or obese.
- About 38% of infants 0 to 6 months old are exclusively breastfed.
- About 800 000 children's lives could be saved every year among children under 5, if all children 0–23 months were optimally breastfed.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough breast milk? Your baby will need to latch on correctly to get enough breast milk. You will learn to recognize signs that he has latched on correctly. You should be able to hear him suck and swallow in a regular pattern. You should have little or no discomfort in your nipple or breast. Your baby should seem calm after breastfeeding. He may fall asleep, or his face, arms, and hands may look relaxed. The following can also help you know your baby is getting enough breast milk:

- **Your baby has several wet or soiled diapers each day.** When he is 4 days old, he should have 3 to 4 bowel movements each day. He should also have 6 to 8 wet diapers a day.
- **Your baby is gaining weight.** Your baby's caregiver will check his weight at each visit to see if he is gaining weight as he should. Your baby may lose weight in the first 3 days after birth. By 4 to 5 days old, your baby should start gaining weight.
- **Your breasts feel different before and after breastfeeding.** Your breasts should feel full before breastfeeding your baby and softer after. This means that your baby is emptying your breasts during breastfeeding.
- **Your baby feeds 8 or more times each day.** Your baby may let you know when he is ready to breastfeed. He may be wide awake and moving his arms and legs more. He may turn his head toward your breast and move his mouth more. He may put his hand up to his mouth and suck his fingers or his fist. You may need to wake your baby to feed him.

When should I contact my caregiver? Contact your caregiver if:

- Your baby is
 - 4 or more days old and has fewer than 6 wet diapers each day.
 - 4 or more days old and has fewer than 3 to 4 bowel movements each day.
 - not gaining weight or looks as if he is losing weight.
 - feeding fewer than 8 times each day.
 - fussy or acts hungry after you breastfeed.
- You do not hear your baby swallowing while you are breastfeeding.
- You have nipple pain during breastfeeding or between feedings. Your nipples look red, dry, cracked, or they have scabs on them.
- Your baby becomes jaundiced (skin and whites of the eyes are turning yellow).
- You feel a lump in your breast that feels tender.
- Your breasts do not feel full, or you are not leaking breast milk within 5 days of giving birth.

Reference:

1. Micromedex's Care Notes Series Online
2. <http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>