

Breastfeeding Essentials

Introduction:

The experience of breastfeeding is special for so many reasons. Exclusive *breastfeeding* is recommended up to 6 months of age, with continued *breastfeeding* along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond. However, it is important to note that breastfeeding is a learned skill which requires patience and practice.

Benefits of breastfeeding:

For Infants	For Mothers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Breast milk is rich in antibodies (special proteins that fight infection) to help the baby fight infections. It's been called "baby's first vaccine."✓ Easier to digest✓ Breastfeeding provides babies perfect nutrition & everything they need for healthy growth and brain development✓ provides protection against obesity and non-communicable disease✓ Lack of breastfeeding is a risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).✓ Human milk protects premature infants from life-threatening gastrointestinal disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ lowers the risk of getting diabetes, ovarian cancer and some forms of breast cancer.✓ helps the mother bond with the baby.✓ Reduced blood loss after childbirth as a result of a hormone, oxytocin, which is released into the mother's bloodstream while breastfeeding. Oxytocin helps the uterus to contract, which reduces uterine bleeding.✓ Reduced levels of stress as a result of several hormones released during breastfeeding.✓ Increased weight loss after pregnancy (if breastfeeding continues for at least six months).

To enable mothers to establish and sustain exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, WHO and UNICEF recommend:

- Initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of life
- Exclusive breastfeeding – that is the infant only receives breast milk without any additional food or drink, not even water
- Breastfeeding on demand – that is as often as the child wants, day and night
- No use of bottles, teats or pacifiers

Mother Cannot Breastfeed If...

1. Are infected with HIV
2. Use illegal drugs
3. If taking cancer chemotherapy agents that interfere with DNA replication and cell division
4. If receiving Radiation Therapies
5. Have active herpes lesions on the breast (shingles, chicken pox)
6. Have untreated, active TB

What you need to know about breastfeeding:

- ❖ Skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding right after birth helps the baby transition to life outside of the womb
- ❖ Keep the baby in your room so you can learn to "read" his/her feeding cues and breastfeed on demand
- ❖ Let the baby nurse whenever he wants, day and night usually about 10 to 12 times in 24 hours in the first few weeks.
- ❖ Feeding often will get your milk flowing, help you make plenty of milk and help baby grow.
- ❖ If baby falls asleep during the first few minutes of feeding, gently wake her up to help her finish feeding.
- ❖ If you are working women express and store your breast milk. When you arrive from work pick up your baby and take time to breastfeed first.

Breastfeeding and diet

- ❖ At least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day
- ❖ Starchy foods, such as rice and potatoes
- ❖ Plenty of fibre from breakfast cereals, rice, pulses
- ❖ Protein, such as lean meat and chicken, fish, eggs and pulses – at least two portions of fish a week is recommended
- ❖ Dairy foods, such as milk, cheese and yoghurt – these contain calcium and are a source of protein
- ❖ Drink plenty of fluids



There are a number of benefits of breastfeeding, many of which continue even after breastfeeding is discontinued. The benefits for the infant and mother increase as breastfeeding continues. However, even breastfeeding for a short period of time provides some benefits for the infant.

Reference:

1. http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/exclusive_breastfeeding/en/
2. Micromedex's Drugdex Healthcare Series online 2.0

For to be Mothers

**You are special because you can make the food that is uniquely perfect for your baby.
Invest the time in yourself and your baby for your health and for the bond that will last a lifetime.**