

Prenatal Education: Topic #1: Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the gift of a lifetime, a gift that only a mother can give.



Breastfeeding gives your baby comfort and nutrition.

- Breastfeeding gives your baby the comfort of being close to you as well as the comfort of sucking. Breastfeeding can help you and your baby feel more relaxed.
- Breastfeeding decreases stress hormones in you and your baby.
- Breastfeeding has pain-relieving properties for your baby. (*Pediatrics* 2002;109;590-593)
- Breast milk contains everything your baby needs to grow and develop the healthiest body possible. Your breast milk changes as the baby grows to give baby the nutrition he needs! Since the nutrients come from a human source, it perfectly matches the baby's digestive system and is digested rapidly and easily.

Breastfeeding protects your baby against disease.

- Formulas come from a cow or soybean source, which are harder for your baby to digest. These foreign proteins may lead to allergies, diabetes, ear infections, and intestinal bleeding.
- Your breastmilk has many proteins that fight bacteria and viruses, and may reduce ear infections, respiratory infections, gastrointestinal diseases, colds and flu, while formula has no disease fighting or protective components.
- Breastfed infants receive protection that lasts a lifetime: lower incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and serious diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.
- Formula fed infants have a greater incidence of ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory illness, gastrointestinal illness, cancer, heart disease, obesity, and SIDS.

Breastfeeding promotes your baby's growth and development.

- Breastmilk contains enzymes and hormones that help baby's digestion, and promote healthy growth.
- The milk of mothers whose infants were born prematurely has more protein and other nutrients specially needed to meet the growth needs of the premature baby.
- Breastmilk contains important fats that help your baby's brain grow. Breastfed babies have higher intelligence scores. These important fats also make your baby have better vision and digestion the rest of his life.
- Formula has no enzymes or growth promoting factors. Formula fed infants are more likely to be overweight.

Breastfeeding saves you time and money.

- Formula costs over \$1700 a year, not including supplies. Plus it takes time to buy and mix formula, and wash and prepare bottles. Breastmilk is always fresh, free, and ready to feed!
- Since breastfed babies get sick less, it means less money spent on doctor visits, medicines, and hospitalizations. Less time lost from work to stay home with a sick baby.

Breastfeeding benefits your health.

- Women who breastfeed have decreased rates of breast and ovarian cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and depression.
- Breastfeeding will help you lose more weight and reduces postpartum bleeding.