

## The Advantages of Breastfeeding

Preparing for a new baby is an extremely exciting and busy time for expectant moms. During this time, it is often when mothers-to-be decide how they are going to feed their new baby.

Many different factors have to be addressed when deciding whether to breastfeed or use commercially prepared formula. This article addresses why breastfeeding is the optimal form of infant nutrition and hopefully will answer common questions and concerns new mothers may have about breastfeeding.

### How Breastfeeding Benefits your baby:

- Does not need to be prepared and is affordable.
- Breast milk is easier than formula for your baby to digest.
- The composition of breast milk changes to meet your growing baby's developmental needs.
- Protects against bacterial and viral infection not only while breastfeeding but long after your baby has been weaned.
- May decrease your baby's chances of developing food allergies.
- Provides optimal brain development. In fact, research has shown that breastfed babies often have higher IQ scores than babies that were formula fed because of the specific fatty acids found only in breast milk.

### How Breastfeeding Benefits you:

- Breastfeeding burns calories so it may assist you in returning to your pre-pregnancy weight quicker.
- Less risk for ovarian and breast cancer
- Breastfeeding releases the hormone Oxytocin which allows the women's uterus to more rapidly return to its normal size.
- Some research has suggested that breastfeeding may even help prevent osteoporosis later in life by increasing bone mineral density.
- Perhaps the best benefit, it allows you and your baby to form a close bond with one another.

### How to know you Baby is getting enough milk:

- Your baby is gaining weight appropriately. Initially your baby may lose some weight, but by two weeks of age you baby should have regained his or her birth weight. Once your baby has regained his or her birth weight, he or she should gain healthily in an ongoing basis.
- Your baby is wetting and dirtying diapers. Usually babies should wet at least six diapers per day. Additionally, your baby should have at least three soft stools per

day. This number will increase as breastfeeding progress improves. However, it is important to note that as your baby gets older, stooling patterns may change again and may not occur every day. Rest assured that this is normal as long as your baby's stools continue to remain soft.

- You baby seems content for one to three hours between feedings. During the newborn period, you should nurse at least every two to three hours. This equates to about eight to twelve times per day.

Breastfeeding does require work. However, with the support of your family, your baby's primary care provider, and resources available in your community---breastfeeding success can be achieved. Even if you can only breastfeed for a short amount of time it is better than choosing not to breastfeed at all.

Lauren Bigley, A.R.N.P.