

Breastfeeding: Breast Milk Production and Benefits

Breast milk is the healthiest food you can give your child. It has every vitamin and nutrient that your baby needs, in just the right amounts. It also contains natural antibodies.

These protect your baby from illnesses like: Ear and lung infections; Diarrhea; And allergies.

Breastfeeding also lowers your child's risk of getting: Diabetes; Chronic digestive diseases; Neurological problems; And some forms of cancer.

Breastfeeding benefits you, too. Breastfeeding stimulates your uterus, helping it get back to its size before pregnancy.

And, it can help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight when you eat healthy and are physically active.

Nursing may lower your risk of developing breast, uterine, and ovarian cancers. It also increases bone strength. And the skin-to-skin contact helps you and your baby bond.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that moms give only breast milk to their babies for the first six months of life and continue to breastfeed along with giving them complementary foods for at least two years. You can breastfeed longer if you and your child desire.

The first milk your breasts make is a thick, highly nutritious substance called colostrum. Colostrum is the perfect food for your child's first few days of life. And your body makes just the right amount for your baby's tiny stomach.

Within three to four days, your baby's sucking stimulates a hormone within you that signals your body to make breast milk. This is referred to as your milk "coming in." Some women describe a tingling feeling in their nipples when their milk begins to flow.

You may, or may not, have this sensation. This feeling is caused by the milk ejection reflex or "let-down." Let-down may feel odd, but it shouldn't be uncomfortable.

The more your baby nurses, the more milk you will make. This increase in milk supply works perfectly for your baby, because within that same amount of time, your baby's stomach grows and can hold more milk.

Feed as long and as often as your baby wants. Your body will make the right amount of milk, ensuring your baby gets what they need to grow and be healthy.

By breastfeeding, you are giving your child the healthiest start in life.