



Breast Milk – All Your Baby Needs for the First Six Months

Perfect nutrition

Your breast milk is specifically designed for your baby and provides the exact nutrients she needs to develop and grow.

Breast milk has all the nutrition a baby needs for the first six months of life. No other food, fluid or water is needed, unless prescribed by your baby's health provider.

Not only does breast milk change to meet your baby's needs as he or she grows, but it changes throughout the day and even throughout a feeding. Giving your baby anything besides breast milk can decrease your milk supply, and it may cause health problems for your baby.

Colostrum

Colostrum is the first food your breasts make. It has special antibodies that protect your baby from infection. Colostrum is made in small amounts, perfect for your baby's small stomach. As your baby's stomach grows, the amount of milk you make will increase.

Benefits of exclusive breastfeeding

Breast milk coats the inside of your baby's digestive system so that harmful bacteria cannot enter his or her body. Babies who drink only breast milk get sick less often than those who drink other fluids. Breast-fed babies also have a lower risk of infections, allergies, pneumonia, respiratory problems, digestive diseases, ear infections, asthma, obesity, SIDS and cancer.

Don't stop after six months

The more breast milk your baby gets, the healthier you and your baby will be. Health benefits increase with time. For breastfeeding moms, more calories go toward making milk, and that helps mom lose pregnancy weight more quickly. Breastfeeding moms often don't have periods for six months or more, which means better child spacing and greater protection against breast cancer. You can breastfeed during pregnancy and even nurse an older child along with an infant (tandem nursing).

Starting around six months, your baby's body will be ready for a little solid food. Babies who begin solids too soon may develop health problems. Talk with your child's health care provider before introducing solid food. Even when your baby is taking solids, we recommend you continue to breast-feed as the main source of nutrition. It will also boost your baby's immune system.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund all support exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months. After that, they recommend breast milk be continued as other foods are introduced and that breastfeeding can continue as long as it is mutually desired by mother and infant.