

Provider Information

BF – Breastfeeding

BF-BB BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

OUTCOME: The parent/family will be able to identify benefits of breastfeeding.

STANDARDS:

1. Identify benefits for mother, including decreased risk of postpartum hemorrhage, enhanced uterine involution, decreased risk of breast cancer, delayed return of menses, improved postpartum weight loss, and bonding. If breastfeeding is not an option, other feeding choices are available. **Refer to “FF - Formula Feeding”.**
2. Identify benefits to the baby (e.g., increased IQ, improved bonding, easier to digest, decreased diarrhea).
3. Identify risk-reducing benefits to the baby (e.g., reduced risk of: type 1 and type 2 diabetes, obesity, food allergies, and infections of mucosal membranes).

Highlights of the Benefits of Breastfeeding:

- The new mother should expect the new baby to be prepared to breastfeed within one-hour after birth. Breastfeeding encourages skin-to-skin contact – which helps to create a bond between mother and baby.
- Stress the importance of exclusively breastfeeding the baby and that for the first six months after birth, the baby only needs breast milk.
- If the mother is exclusively breastfeeding, do not use formula and do not give water or juice for the first 6 months. If the mother is going to away from the child, the mother should learn to express her breast milk using a breast pump and prepare for her absence from the baby by expressing and collecting her breast milk. Obviously, this stored breast milk will be given in a baby bottle. However, the use of bottles and artificial nipples may interfere with the development of optimal breastfeeding and the mother should try to breastfeed rather than rely on bottles. Bottles should be used only in the absence of the mother.
- Discourage the use of pacifiers and find other ways to soothe a fussy baby.
- Education provided on how to give baby any fluid supplementation
- Frequent breastfeeding encourages the production of breast milk. Do not worry about having “enough milk.” Your breasts will make as much milk as needed.
- Find a good position that supports a good “latch-on.” Latch-on means your nipple is in the baby’s mouth so that your baby can suckle well.
- If the mother does not want to breastfeed, discuss her reasons to not breastfeed and address the concerns raised.

- Stress that breastfeeding is best and the hospital and clinic will do all they can to provide support to the mother. The best nutrition for your baby is breast milk.

The importance and duration of Breastfeeding:

Exclusive breastfeeding is sufficient to support optimal growth and development for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding should begin within 1 hour of birth and is made possible by skin to skin contact between mother and baby immediately after the baby is born. Breastfeeding mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of their baby's life and to start feeding their baby solid foods at 6 months while continuing to breastfeed. Breastfeeding should be continued for at least the first year of life and beyond as mutually desired by mother and baby.

Maternal benefits from breastfeeding

- Life can be easier when you breastfeed – Breastfeeding may take a little more effort than formula feeding at first. However, it can make life easier once you and your baby settle into a good routine. In addition, when you breastfeed, there are no bottles and nipples to sterilize. You do not have to buy, measure, and mix formula. And there are no bottles to warm in the middle of the night! You can satisfy your baby's hunger right away when breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding can save money – Formula and feeding supplies can cost well over \$1,500 each year, depending on how much your baby eats. Breastfed babies are also sick less often, which can lower health care costs.
- Breastfeeding can feel great – Physical contact is important to newborns. It can help them feel more secure, warm, and comforted. Mothers can benefit from this closeness, as well. Breastfeeding requires a mother to take some quiet relaxed time to bond. The skin-to-skin contact can boost the mother's oxytocin levels. Oxytocin is a hormone that helps milk flow and can calm the mother.
- Breastfeeding can be good for the mother's health, too – Breastfeeding is linked to a lower risk of these health problems in women:
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Breast cancer
 - Ovarian cancer
 - Postpartum Depression
 - Experts are still looking at the effects of breastfeeding on osteoporosis and weight loss after birth. Many studies have reported greater weight loss for breastfeeding mothers than for those who do not. But more research is needed to understand if a strong link exists.
- Mothers miss less work – Breastfeeding mothers miss fewer days from work because their infants are sick less often.

Breastfeeding protects babies

- Early breast milk is liquid gold – called colostrums. This is thick, yellow, first breast milk that the breast makes during pregnancy and just after birth. This milk is very rich in nutrients and antibodies to protect your baby. Although the baby only gets a small amount of colostrum at each feeding, it matches the amount his or her tiny stomach can hold.
- Your breast milk changes as the baby grows – Colostrum changes into mature milk. By the third to fifth day after birth, this mature breast milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby continue to grow. It is a thinner type of milk than colostrum, but it provides all of the nutrients and antibodies your baby needs.
- The more you breastfeed the more milk you will have so the mother does not need to worry about ‘having enough milk.’
- Breast milk is easier to digest – for most babies — especially premature babies — breast milk is easier to digest than formula. The proteins in formula are made from cow’s milk and it takes time for babies’ stomachs to adjust to digesting them.
- Breast milk fights disease – The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breast milk protect babies from illness. This protection is unique; formula cannot match the chemical makeup of human breast milk. In fact, among formula-fed babies, ear infections and diarrhea are more common. Formula-fed babies also have higher risks of:
 - Lower respiratory infections
 - Asthma
 - Obesity
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Some research shows that breastfeeding can also reduce the risk of Type 1 diabetes, childhood leukemia, and atopic dermatitis (a type of skin rash) in babies.
 - Breastfeeding has also been shown to lower the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

Fluid Supplementation

A healthy breastfeed baby does not require fluid supplementation. The breast milk provides the infant with adequate fluids. Infants can become easily dehydrated in hot weather or after bouts of diarrhea. In such cases, breastfeed infants may require fluid supplementation via Intravenous (IV) fluids or oral fluids in a bottle. Consult your healthcare provider before giving your infant any fluid supplementation other than breast milk as appropriate.

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on the [Benefits of Breastfeeding](#)

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