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Making an Informed Choice about Your Baby's Feeding

What you choose to feed your baby is one of the first important decisions you will make as a parent. This information will help you make an informed choice about feeding your baby.

Health experts and doctors recommend giving **only breast milk for the first 6 months** of your baby's life. After that, continue to feed breast milk while your baby is learning to take solid foods.

These health experts include: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control, and the U.S. Surgeon General.

Why should my baby get only breast milk?

- Human milk is made for babies. Breast milk has everything that your new baby needs to grow and be healthy.
- Breast milk gives your baby nutrients and infection fighting antibodies not found in formula.
- Breast milk is better for your baby's stomach and your baby may have fewer problems with spitting up and constipation.
- Breastfed children do better in reading, math, and learning test scores.



As a mother, what are my benefits of breastfeeding?

- Breastfeeding gives you a special closeness with your baby
- You may have less bleeding, and lower risk of infections after birth
- Your family will save money!
 - Feeding supplies and formula cost thousands of dollars in the first year
 - Fewer medical bills
 - Fewer lost days at work due to infant illness
- Creates less waste – Breastfeeding is friendly to our Earth.



Are there health risks to not feeding my baby breast milk?

Infants who are fed formula have higher rates of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Obesity as a child or an adult
- Serious illness needing hospital care
- Serious infections of the lung, ear, throat, kidneys, and bowels
- Serious lifetime diseases, such as asthma, diabetes, childhood cancers, bowel diseases (*Crohn's, ulcerative colitis and Celiac disease*)
- Heart disease and high blood pressure
- Allergies
- Skin diseases (eczema)

Do I have health risks if I do not breastfeed?

Breastfeeding offers health benefits for women. Women who do not breastfeed have a higher risk for chronic disease later in life, such as:

- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Breast Cancer
- Cancer of the womb (uterus) and ovaries
- Bone disease (osteoporosis)
- Arthritis

Breast milk is important for developing a healthy immune system. Feeding formula can take away some of the benefits that breast milk gives and put your baby's health at risk.

- Formula can change how your baby's immune system develops. The immune system protects us from infections and diseases.
- Giving formula can decrease your milk supply. The more you nurse, the more milk you will make.

Are there any health reasons why I should not feed my breast milk to my baby?

There are only a few health reasons you should not give your breast milk:

- HIV infection
- Use of street drugs and/or alcohol abuse
- Receiving certain radiation treatments for cancer
- Taking certain medicines such as cancer medicines, and some others where the risks to the baby are worse than the benefits of breast milk feeding



Talk with your OB Provider/Lactation Consultant if you have:

- Active untreated chickenpox/shingles
- Active herpes sores on your breast
- Active TB infection (tuberculosis)
- Had previous breast surgery

Are there other ways that I can give breast milk to my baby?

You can continue to give your baby breast milk after you return to work. Some women choose to give breast milk in a bottle or by other feeding methods.



Deciding how to feed your baby is a personal choice. Health care staff can assist you in helping you to make this important decision.

For more information about breastfeeding:

- American Academy of Pediatrics <http://www2.aap.org/breastfeeding/>
- Black Breastfeeding Mothers Association <http://blackbreastfeedingmothers.org>
- International Lactation Consultant Association www.ilca.org
- La Leche League International www.llli.org
- Stanford University – Breastfeeding <http://newborns.stanford.edu/breastfeeding>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office on Women's Health www.womenshealth.gov

References:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (2012) Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk Pediatrics 2012;129:e827–e841
- ACOG Committee Opinion No. 361 (2013) Breastfeeding: Maternal and Newborn Aspects
- AWHONN Breastfeeding Position Statement 2015 JOGNN 44 (1) 145-150
- CDC (2011) The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding www.cdc.gov
- Specifications Manual for Joint Commission (v2015A) Perinatal Care Measure: Exclusive Breast Milk Feeding
- World Health Organization (2014) Global Nutrition Report <http://www.who.int/nutrition>