

## Breast feeding: the best start in life.

Breast is the best form of nutrition you can give your baby. It plays an essential role in supporting your baby's immune system during the first year whilst it is developing. Breast feeding will also help to protect your baby from a variety of infections and other illnesses.

### Benefits for your baby

- Babies who are breastfed have a higher IQ and score up to 7 points higher! (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7075511.stm>)
- Babies who are breast fed for at least six months, develop fewer colds, ear infections, gastric infections and pneumonia.
- Friendly bacteria called Bifido bacteria help to protect your baby's gut from harmful bacteria and reduces your baby's risk of colic and allergies to food, eczema, asthma and hay-fever.
- Breast fed babies are thirty percent less likely to develop obesity than formula fed babies.
- Vitamins and minerals in breast milk are up to twenty times more easily absorbed than those in formulas. This means your baby is less likely to suffer from deficiencies, such as iron.
- Breast fed babies also have a lowered risk of developing Diabetes and have better neurological development.
- Research has shown that there may be a protective effect against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDs).

### Benefits for you

- Reduces your risk of developing breast cancer. The longer you breast feed the lower the risk. Women who breast feed for between four to twelve months have an approximately 22% lower risk. There is also a reduced risk of ovarian cancer.
- Encourages bonding between you and your baby (promoted by the hormone oxytocin).
- Encourages your uterus to contract back into its pre pregnancy size and can reduce blood loss after birth. This means you recover from the birth experience more quickly.
- Helps shed weight gained during pregnancy. Breastfeeding uses around 500 calories per day!
- May help you have stronger bones in later life (thereby reducing your risk of developing osteoporosis).
- Feel less stressed (prolactin encourages calmness)
- Have increased mental alertness (oxytocin boosts Short-Term memory)
- Convenience: no need to get up the middle of the night to make up a bottle of milk. It also doesn't cost you anything!
- Weaning may be easier as your baby is 'primed' to accept different tasting foods more readily as they taste them via your breast milk.

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### Breastfeeding Tips

- Breast feed within the first thirty minutes of birth in order to begin establishing feeding while your baby's suckling reflexes are strong.
- Avoid over stimulation of baby before the first feed. This means that bathing, dressing weighing and measuring all take second place to breast feeding.
- When at home, make sure you are comfortable before you begin to breast feed. Have a large glass of water and some snacks close to hand (as breastfeeding can make you very hungry!). Have plenty of pillows to support your baby and your back or buy a breastfeeding pillow (from experience I found the Widgey Nursing Support Pillow invaluable).
- Don't worry that your milk supply is little within the first 3-4 days of birth. This initial colostrum plays a valuable role in preventing infection and is designed to coat your baby's intestine with valuable antibodies. Babies often don't feed much within the first 24-48 hours.
- Breastfeeding shouldn't be painful. If it is, your baby is probable not attached correctly. Ask the hospital breastfeeding nurse, midwife or health visitor to check that your baby is correctly positioned and attached.
- Dark green cabbage leaves (organic) are very effective in relieving engorged breasts. Lightly steam them and let them cool before putting them on your breasts.

Don't start a feeding routine until your baby is at least six weeks old. Breast milk is digested much faster than formula milk so your baby should feed on demand. This may be anywhere between 1-5 hourly. Starting a routine too early may reduce your milk flow and create problems.

### What should I do if I have problems?

- Speak to your midwife or health visitor.
- See your doctor: you or your baby may have thrush (or another condition) which is causing the problem and can be treated medically.
- See a cranial osteopath.
- See a breast feeding counsellor (also called lactation counsellor). They will come to your home (not cheap, but worth every penny). Do not rely on telephone support as you need to be shown how to hold your baby correctly when breastfeeding.

## The better breastfeeding diet!

To prevent poor milk supply, it is advisable to eat well during your pregnancy so that you have all the right nutrients to make good quality milk as well as a plentiful supply! This includes:

- Eating 3 meals and 2 good snacks a day:
  - Breast feeding increases your appetite
- Eating plenty of complex carbohydrate:
  - Wholegrains, vegetables, pulses/legumes
  - Oatcakes, bean, avocado or humous dips
- Eating good quality protein:
  - Quiona, millet, soya, fish, beans, lentils, eggs, chicken, cottage cheese, natural yoghurt, seeds and nuts
- Eating oily fish at least twice a week:
  - Mackerel, salmon, herring, sardine/pilchard, fresh tuna
  - These are good sources of essential fatty acids for you and your baby
- Eating at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day:
  - Apples, pears, courgettes, spinach, tomatoes
- Snacking on fruit, nuts and seeds:
  - And not on sugary snacks, such as biscuits
- Drinking at least 1.5 litres (2 1/2 pints) of filtered or mineral water a day:
  - Always have a drink beside you when you sit down to feed as your baby's sucking will stimulate thirst
  - There is nothing more annoying than wanting a drink when you have just got settled

The UK DoH recommends that all breastfeeding mothers take a vitamin and mineral supplement to ensure your breast milk has enough nutrients for your baby.

And avoiding:

- Caffeine found in tea and coffee (which can agitate your bay and prevent restful sleep), alcohol (which prevents a baby from feeding as long and can damage brain cells) and dieting (you need all the energy you have to make a plentiful milk supply).