



## Feeding Your Baby

# Your baby's first food: breastmilk

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**B**reastmilk provides good nutrition to babies for the first year of life. It is recommended that infants be exclusively breastfed for at least the first six months of life. Breastfeeding can continue up to two years of age when combined with age-appropriate solid foods. You and your baby will benefit from whatever length of time you can breastfeed.

### Benefits for parents

- Breastfeeding helps develop feelings of closeness between mother and baby. Dad needs to feel close to baby, too. Be sure dad has time to play, bath and read to your baby.
- Breastfeeding saves money. There is no need to buy formula.
- Breastfeeding can save time. There are no bottles to wash or formula to prepare.
- Breastfeeding may make weight loss easier for the mother.

### Benefits for baby

- Breastmilk is easy for your baby to digest.
- Breastmilk provides nutrients that help with brain development in newborns and infants.
- Breastmilk helps babies develop healthy immune systems. Your baby will be less likely to get sick.
- Breastmilk lowers your child's risk of developing asthma.
- Breastmilk may reduce your child's risk of developing weight problems as they grow older.
- Breastmilk is sanitary. It is always the correct temperature. There is no need to worry about unsafe water supplies.

Your baby should be fed breastmilk or iron-fortified formula for the first year. Wait until your

baby is one year old to serve them cow's milk. Babies are not ready for solid food until they are 4 to 6 months old. Starting cow's milk and solid foods too early can be harmful for your child. Check with your doctor before adding any solid food to your baby's diet.



### You will know your baby is getting enough breastmilk if:

- They have six or more wet diapers each day.
- They seem happy between feedings.
- Their weight increases steadily.

### Nutrition for breastfeeding moms

- You may need more of some vitamins and minerals. Be sure to include whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and lean protein-rich foods daily.
- You may want to continue taking your prenatal vitamin.
- Your fluid needs are increased while breastfeeding. Try to drink water each time you breastfeed.
- Limit caffeine containing coffee, tea and sodas to less than 2 cups a day. Too much may make your baby act fussy.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol can pass into your breast milk and to your infant.
- Your decision to breastfeed or bottle feed should be based on what will make the happiest, most relaxed relationship between you and your baby. Most of all, enjoy the time you spend with your baby!

## References:

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