IMPORTANT Breastfeeding INFORMATION

Breastfeeding is one of the most natural and beneficial acts a mother can do for her child. The most dramatic health benefits have been proven to pass from mother to child through breast milk. These include antibodies, which protect an infant at birth, to the exclusive nutrients in mother's milk, which have been shown to prevent a number of childhood diseases. **(There is no other single action by which a mother can so impact the present and future health of her baby than through breastfeeding.)**

Nothing can duplicate the properties of breast milk, no matter how many vitamins, minerals and supplements are added to what is basically a chemical formulation.

Breast milk remains the one and only natural, complete and complex nutrition for human infants. It is nature's formula for ensuring the health and quality of life for infants, as well as through childhood to adult life. Just as importantly, breastfeeding promotes a very special bond between mother and child that only a mother can provide. The major benefits of breastfeeding follow.

Health Benefits for Babies Who Breastfeed

- It is important to breastfeed your baby exclusively for 6 months and continue to breastfeed after your baby starts eating solid foods.
- Protection against diarrhea, gastroenteritis and other stomach upsets.
- Reduced risk of childhood diabetes.
- Protection against ear infections, respiratory illnesses, allergies and asthma.
- Reduced risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Protection against meningitis, childhood lymphoma, Crohn's disease and ulcerative enterocolitis.
- Reduced incidence and severity of allergic disease.
- Improved brain and nervous system development and development of higher IQs.
- Reduced risk of heart disease later in life.
- Increased bone density.
- Known to play an important role in emotional development.
- Enjoyment of a special warm bonding and emotional relationship between baby and mother.

Health Benefits to Mothers Who Breastfeed

- Reduced risk of breast, ovarian and endometrial cancers.
- Reduced risk of anemia.
- Protection against osteoporosis and hip fracture later in life.
- Reduced risk of mortality for women with rheumatoid arthritis.
- Quicker return of mother's body to its pre-pregnancy state.
- Helps to delay the return of fertility and to space subsequent pregnancies.
- Development of a special emotional relationship and bonding with her child.
- Reduction or elimination of the cost of formula (in the thousands of dollars per year) since breast milk is free.
- Breastfed babies are sick less, thus reducing health care costs to family and requiring less time off work.

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WHAT IS *Colostrum?*

Colostrum is the first milk your body produces to feed your baby. It is yellow in color and thicker than mature milk. It has many important benefits for your baby.

- Your body starts to make colostrum during pregnancy — usually about the time you first feel your body move.

- It is the baby's perfect first food because it is easier to digest and use than true milk.

- It acts as your baby's first immunization because it is so rich in antibodies and immunities.

- Colostrum is full of nutrients, antibodies and immunities that will coat your baby's gut and help to protect against infections such as E. Coli.

- Colostrum works as a natural laxative, and helps your baby to pass the meconium (thick, black, sticky stool), which helps to avoid jaundice.

- It should be given to your baby before anything else enters the system, which is why breastfeeding right after delivery is so important.

- The first feed of colostrum is only about one to two teaspoons, the perfect amount for your baby's immature gut, which is about the size of a walnut.

- Your baby will breastfeed eight to 12 times in 24 hours and get about an ounce of colostrum, which is all the nourishment it needs until the milk comes.

- Pre-term colostrum has an even greater potential for preventing infection than term colostrum, so a premature baby needs colostrum.

- Breastfeeding colostrum is something wonderful you can do that will provide your baby with a healthier start.

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