

The Benefits of

BREASTFEEDING

Information for Pregnant Women and New Families



Benefits of breastfeeding for babies:

- Decreased pain during painful procedures
- Better brain development
- Fewer ear infections
- Fewer respiratory tract infections (especially severe infections)
- Fewer gastrointestinal (GI) infections/episodes of diarrhea
- Fewer serious childhood illnesses such as:
 - Leukemia
 - Necrotizing enterocolitis (a severe illness of premature infants)
 - Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
 - Type 1 diabetes
- Healthier bacteria in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract with fewer episodes of diarrhea
- Lower risk of childhood asthma
- Lower risk of eczema/atopic dermatitis (an allergic skin condition)
- Lower risk of obesity in adolescence and adulthood
- Possible lower risk of other childhood/adulthood illnesses such as:
 - Bacterial infections in the blood, urine, and spinal fluid
 - Celiac disease
 - High cholesterol
 - High blood pressure
 - Type 2 diabetes

Benefits of breastfeeding for mothers:

- Helps uterus return to normal size after delivery
- Helps decrease bleeding and anemia after delivery
- Lowers risk of breast cancer
- Lowers risk of ovarian cancer
- Lowers risk of postpartum depression
- Possible additional benefits:
 - May help aid in gradual weight loss after delivery
 - Lowers risk of heart disease
 - Lowers risk of fractures from osteoporosis

Benefits of breastfeeding for families/communities:

- A mother's breast milk is always available and ready for her baby
- A mother's breast milk is free
- Families are healthier due to lower rates of infection in the infant and family
- Parents miss less work as their children are healthier
- Less use of energy for manufacturing and less waste/pollution in the environment

Adapted from materials developed by the NH's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding program, and the DHMC-Lebanon Baby Friendly Task Force and Women's Health Resource Center with their permission.



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