



Maternity

Why Breast Is Best: The Amazing Health Benefits of Breastfeeding

If you're expecting, you've probably heard that breast milk is healthier for your baby than formula. But you may still have questions: Why is it better? What does breast milk do for my baby that formula can't? How long do I have to breastfeed to get these benefits?

And you may not have heard of this bonus: Breastfeeding has health benefits for nursing moms too.

Read on and discover all the advantages of breastfeeding your baby. Then milk them for all they're worth!

Baby Boon

Breastfeeding has a long list of healthy pros for baby, both for now and in the future.

Now:

- Breastfed babies have a lower incidence of many common childhood ailments, such as ear infections and diarrhea. Because breast milk is more easily digested than formula, breastfed babies tend to have fewer gastrointestinal problems in general.
- Babies who are exclusively formula-fed are 250% more likely to be hospitalized for lower respiratory tract diseases in their first year than breastfed babies.
- Breastfed babies are only half as likely to experience Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) as formula-fed babies.
- Studies have shown that breastfed babies have a better antibody response to vaccines (which means the vaccines are more effective).
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months, and continued breastfeeding for the rest of the first year. However, even a shorter amount of time (such as 3 to 6 months) provides significant health benefits.

Later:

- A recent study indicates that children who were breastfed have a lower incidence of childhood leukemia.
- Breastfeeding also corresponds to a lowered risk for many chronic conditions later in life, such as celiac disease, type 1 diabetes and Crohn's disease.
- Breastfed babies are less likely to become obese in childhood.
- Breastfeeding may even make your child smarter! Children who were breastfed score an average of 8 points higher on IQ tests than those who were formula-fed.

More Benefits: The Mother Lode

The advantages of breastfeeding are not all just for baby. Moms get health benefits too!

- Nursing mothers heal faster after delivery. Hormones released during nursing cause the uterus to return more quickly to its normal size.
- Moms who breastfeed have a lower risk of premenopausal breast cancer and ovarian cancer.
- Breastfeeding can burn as much as 500 calories a day, making it easier for nursing moms to return to their prepregnancy weight.
- Breastfeeding helps strengthen your bones – nursing moms have a lower incidence of postmenopausal osteoporosis.

Breastfeeding even benefits the environment; there's no packaging, and you'll need fewer bottles over the course of your baby's first years.

Of course, there are some women for whom breastfeeding is not possible, due to certain medical conditions. But for most mothers and babies, breastfeeding is possible, and offers so many advantages, it's well worth the effort. That's why Covenant is a designated Baby-Friendly Hospital, which means we offer an optimal environment for breastfeeding mothers. With education and support, we do all we can to get you and baby off to a great start.

To learn more about breastfeeding, childbirth education and more, visit the [Maternity Services](#) page.