



Patient Information

Infant Feeding: Points to Consider

Is Milk from the Breast Best?

Choosing how and what to feed your baby is a personal decision that warrants careful consideration of the facts and your options. Feeding your baby breast milk is a healthy and responsible decision, and feeding your baby formula is, too. Each choice carries its own advantages and disadvantages. When deciding what to feed your baby, focus on what's best for you, your baby and your family.

Health care experts recommend breastfeeding for your baby's first year. Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for the first 6 months because it contains the appropriate amounts of carbohydrate, protein and fat. It provides the digestive enzymes, minerals, vitamins and hormones your baby needs. Breast milk also contains antibodies from you that can help your baby resist infections. Experts agree that breastfeeding your baby for any length of time, regardless of how short, is of benefit to you and your baby.

Ways to Provide Breast Milk

You can feed your baby with breast milk by either breastfeeding or pumping your breast milk and dispensing it in a bottle. Use only one method for at least the first 2 months because infants who are switched between breastfeeding and bottle-feeding can develop sucking and feeding problems (known as nipple confusion). However, after 2 months, most babies adapt to bottle nipples easily.

Advantages of Breastfeeding

Research shows that breastfed babies may have a lower risk of:

- ear infections (otitis media)
- gastrointestinal infections
- low iron levels in the blood (iron-deficiency anemia)
- skin diseases (infantile eczema)
- allergy problems
- digestive problems (constipation or diarrhea)
- obesity
- high blood pressure
- tooth decay.

If you decide to breastfeed, maintain good nutrition and lifestyle choices. You should:

- understand that any medications you take may enter the breast milk and affect your baby (check with your NP or lactation consultant

about which are safe)

- maintain adequate nutrition
- drink plenty of fluids, especially water, every day
- get plenty of rest
- take good care of your nipples and breasts
- relax and enjoy the experience.

Common Breastfeeding Problems

It's common for first-time mothers to feel confused, be afraid or ashamed to ask for help for such a "natural" activity, feel overwhelmed by the time commitment breastfeeding requires, be exhausted by the frequent feedings (every 2 to 3 hours, day and night), feel socially isolated from others, and frightened by conflicting emotions of enjoyment and resentment.

You might also experience temporary physical problems, such as:

- nipple soreness
- breast engorgement
- leaking breasts
- letdown reflex (other than during breastfeeding)
- inadequate milk supply
- difficulty knowing how much milk the baby is drinking.

Talk to your NP if you experience any of these problems. They can all be resolved.

Questions to Ask Before You Decide

If you are still unsure of whether or not to breastfeed, ask your NP some (or all) of the following questions:

- Why would I want to (or not want to) breastfeed my child?
- What should I expect breastfeeding to be like?
- Where can I turn for support, assistance and answers?
- What if I change my mind about breastfeeding after my baby is born?
- How will breastfeeding my baby affect my other relationships or work?
- What can I do to cope with the physical discomforts of breastfeeding?
- How long should I breastfeed my baby?

Additional Notes:
