



THE IMPORTANCE OF Breastfeeding



BREASTMILK BENEFITS

"Breast is best" statements are outdated and inaccurate. For today's topic: BREASTMILK IS THE ONLY!

Many know that breast/chestfeeding is the OPTIMAL, WELL BALANCED, PERFECT NUTRITION for babies; but it's more than just a meal. Breastmilk boasts many benefits to children, impacting immunity, cognition, and brain and socio-emotional development. In the lactating parent, breastfeeding influences mood, affect, stress and child-parent bonding (Krol & Grossman, 2018). Colostrum, (the babies first milk), is often referred to as a babies "first immunization" (Kalarikkal & Pflieger, 2021). Containing various bioactive substances including immunoglobulins, enzymes, and growth factors, some say human milk is a vehicle of

communication between parent-child immune systems (Young & McGuire, 2020). Commensal bacteria found in human milk protects newborns from pathogens by encouraging colonization of beneficial microbes in the newborn gut (Lyons et al., 2020). Furthermore, research has linked breastfeeding to improved memory retention, language skills, intelligence and cognition later in life. Socio-emotional development is bolstered by oxytocin-containing breastmilk. Suckling, warmth and touch during breastfeeding facilitates socio-emotional tendencies by enhancing the positive and reducing negative ones, resulting in advanced attentional brain responses in the breastfed child (Krol & Grossman, 2018). Breastmilk is the ONLY food for babies that can produce these benefits, and is the ONLY food nutritionally curated to fit your baby's development; the baby's nutritional needs control the milk quantity and components. If breast/chestfeeding is not feasible, expressed human breastmilk is the ideal food source for newborns and children compared to artificial milk (formula). So, lets cheers to the wonderful mammalian design with a big sip of: breastmilk!

- Breastfeeding offers protection to the infant against ailments such as gastrointestinal tract infections, enterocolitis, respiratory tract infections, and decreases the incidence of SIDS (Lyons et al., 2020).
- Postulated benefits include lessened risks of developing asthma, food allergies, type 1 diabetes, Crohn's disease and obesity in childhood and adult life (Kalarikkal & Pflieger, 2021).
- Breastfeeding mothers/parents have reduced blood pressure and reduced heart rate reactivity when compared to mothers who formula feed (Krol & Grossman, 2018).
- Breastfeeding mothers/parents may have a lessened risk of postpartum depression (Krol & Grossman, 2018).

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Krol, K. M., & Grossman, T. (2018). Psychological effects of breastfeeding on children and mothers. *Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz*, 61(8), 977-985. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00103-018-2769-0>

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Young, L., & McGuire, W. (2020). Immunologic properties of human milk and clinical implications in the neonatal population. *Neoreviews*, e809-e816. <https://doi.org/10.1542/neo.21-12-e809>