



# Why Breastfeed

## Your Health

Getting ready for the birth of your baby is an exciting and busy time. One of the most important decisions you will make is how to feed your baby.

Deciding to breastfeed can give your baby the best possible start in life. Breastfeeding benefits you and your baby in many ways. It also is a proud tradition of many cultures.

## Benefits of Breastfeeding

In general, the longer you breastfeed, the greater the benefits will be to you and your baby, and the longer these benefits will last.

## Why is breastfeeding so good for my baby?

Breastfeeding is good for your baby because:

1. Breastfeeding provides warmth and closeness. The physical contact helps create a special bond between you and your baby.
2. Human milk has many benefits.
  - It's easier for your baby to digest.
  - It doesn't need to be prepared.
  - It's always available.
  - It has all the nutrients, calories, and fluids your baby needs to be healthy.
  - It has growth factors that ensure the best development of your baby's organs.
  - It has many substances that formulas don't have that protect your baby from many diseases and infections. In fact, breastfed babies are less likely to have:
    - o Ear infections
    - o Diarrhea
    - o Pneumonia, wheezing, and bronchiolitis
    - o Other bacterial and viral infections, such as meningitis
  - Research also suggests that breastfeeding may help to protect against obesity, diabetes, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, eczema, colitis, and some cancers.

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# Why Breastfeed *continued*



## Why is breastfeeding good for me?

Breastfeeding is good for your health because it helps:

- Release hormones in your body that promote mothering behavior.
- Return your uterus to the size it was before pregnancy more quickly.
- Burn more calories, which may help you lose the weight you gained during pregnancy.
- Delay the return of your menstrual period to help keep iron in your body.
- Provide contraception, but only if these 3 conditions are met:
  - o You are exclusively breastfeeding and not giving your baby any other supplements
  - o It is within the first 6 months after birth
  - o Your period has not returned
- Reduce the risk of ovarian cancer and breast cancer.
- Keep bones strong, which helps protect against bone fractures in older age.

## Breastfeeding: A Natural Gift

Breastmilk gives your baby more than just good nutrition. It also provides important substances to fight infection. Breastfeeding has medical and psychological benefits for both of you. For many mothers and babies, breastfeeding goes smoothly from the start. For others, it takes a little time and several attempts to get the process going effectively. Like anything new, breastfeeding takes some practice. This is perfectly normal. If you need help, ask the doctors and nurses while you are still in the hospital, your pediatrician, a lactation specialist, or a breastfeeding support group.

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*The information contained should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.*

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