



Public Health

Seattle & King County

HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

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How breastfeeding is best for you and your baby

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusively breastfeeding your baby for the first 6 months. After six months gradually introduce iron-enriched solid foods to complement the breast milk diet. It is further recommended that breastfeeding continue for at least 12 months, and thereafter, for as long as mutually desired.

Breastfeeding is more than just food

It is beginning of a special relationship between you and your baby. When you breastfeed, you have a relationship with your baby that no one else can have.

Breast milk is a special food that supplies perfect nutrition for your baby. Each time you breastfeed you will also be helping your baby fight germs.

- Your breast milk is always available when your baby wants it. Anywhere. Anytime.
- You can be sure your breast milk is pure, clean, and safe.
- Your breast milk changes to meet the needs of your growing baby. Formula stays the same.
- Babies need different amounts of food. Breastfed babies get just the right amount.

Breastfeeding advantages for the baby:

- Possibly less likelihood of developing asthma
- Protects against some childhood cancers
- Possibly less diabetes (type-1)
- Improved mental development
- Less diarrhea
- Fewer lower respiratory infections
- Fewer urinary tract infection
- Less bacterial meningitis
- Fewer ear infections
- Possibly less sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Possibly less diabetes (type-1)
- Possibly less allergic diseases

If breastfed babies do get sick, the illness is usually milder and doesn't last as long.

Breastfeeding Resources and Support

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www.metrokc.gov/health

Breastfeeding advantages for the mother:

- Less bleeding after giving birth
- Reduced risk of ovarian cancer
- Reduced risk of breast cancer
- Reduced risk of anemia
- Reduced risk of osteoporosis
- Quicker weight loss after giving birth
- Less bone decay and fewer hip fractures in old age
- Less expensive

Breastfeeding saves money

Formula is expensive. You will also spend money on bottles, nipples, and other equipment. If you are on the WIC Program, and you decide not to breastfeed, WIC supplies some of the formula your baby will need. As your baby grows, you will have to buy more formula than WIC supplies.

Breastfeeding helps the environment

Breastfeeding is natural and good for the environment. There is no waste; your formula cans and old bottles will not add to our landfills.

Breastfeeding is good for you too!

- You will not need to wash bottles or heat formula. Your milk is naturally clean and warm.
- You won't need to stumble around in the dark to make your baby's bottle. Your milk is ready and warm.
- Breastfed babies smell sweeter and their diapers do not have an unpleasant odor.
- Breastfed babies are less likely to spit up than formula-fed babies. When they do, it does not stain like formula.
- Your uterus will return to its normal size faster when you breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding reduces the risk of some types of ovarian and breast cancer.
- Sitting down to breastfeed will help you rest and regain your strength after pregnancy. Breastfeeding hormones will help you relax and feel close to your baby.

When not to breastfeed:

- An infant whose mother uses illegal drugs, has untreated active tuberculosis or has HIV should not be breastfed.
- Although most medications are safe for the breastfed infant, there are a few medications that mothers may need to take that may make it necessary to interrupt breastfeeding temporarily. Call Care Northwest at (900) 225-2273 to find out if the medication you are taking is safe.