

Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breast milk is preferred over formula when breastfeeding is feasible for both the parent and baby. Exclusive breastfeeding, which means no food or liquid other than breastmilk, is recommended for the first 6 months of life. Continued breastfeeding is also recommended as solid foods are introduced up to 2 years old or longer.¹

Some of the numerous benefits of breastfeeding include:

Benefits for Parents^{1,3}

- Bonding with child
- Lowers risk of breast and ovarian cancer*
- Cost-effective
- Sustainable and Earth-friendly
- Lower risk of postpartum depression*
- Lower risk of bleeding after delivery*
- Release of “feel good” hormones
- Less need for time off from work to care for a sick child

*Benefits specific to biological birth parents

Benefits for Child^{1,3}

- Bonding with parent
- Enhanced immunity (antibodies)
- Lower risk of ear infections
- Lower risk of asthma
- Lower risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)
- Lower risk of skin conditions (e.g., eczema)
- Lower risk of leukemia
- Lower risk of diabetes (types 1 and 2)
- Higher intelligence scores
- Develops healthy bacteria in the gut

Despite the benefits of breastfeeding, some parents cannot take this approach. For example, certain medications may pass into the breastmilk and are not safe for the child. If you have concerns about medications or health conditions that may impact your ability to breastfeed, talk to your functional medicine provider for guidance or referral to a lactation specialist.

Breastfeeding Resources

- [La Leche League International](#)
- [International Lactation Consultant Association](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Chestfeeding for Transgender and Non-Binary Parents](#)

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Breastfeeding. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/breastfeeding>. Accessed April 9, 2020.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding: recommendations and benefits. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/recommendations-benefits.html>. Updated November 4, 2019. Accessed April 9, 2020.
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. Section on Breastfeeding. Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*. 2012;129(3):e827-e841. doi:10.1542/peds.2011-3552.