

Breastfeeding your baby

Breastfeeding has many benefits for both mother and baby. With few exceptions, almost every woman can breastfeed.

Many mothers enjoy the feelings of closeness that breastfeeding provides with their babies. Released when the baby nurses, the hormones oxytocin and prolactin increase the warm, motherly, relaxed feelings associated with breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding will help your uterus, the organ that houses your baby during pregnancy, to go back to normal size, shape and position more quickly.

Research has shown that long-term breastfeeding helps protect you from breast, uterine and ovarian cancer, osteoporosis, and hip and wrist fractures.

Breastfeeding can also provide a contraceptive effect. Attending a natural family planning program can provide you with important guidance in determining when your body returns to fertile menstrual cycles while breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding represents a major cost savings. It's estimated that six months of only breastfeeding can save the cost of a major appliance for your home! If all mothers breastfed their babies, more than one billion healthcare dollars could be saved each year from not having to treat four major childhood illnesses: gastrointestinal illnesses, middle ear infections, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and diabetes.

Neonatologists, doctors who specialize in the care of newborns, sometimes call breast milk:

- A designer drug because it protects the infant against a large number of illnesses including:

RSV.	Childhood lymphoma.	Allergies and asthma.
Chronic constipation.	Bacterial infections.	Colitis.
Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).	Crohn's disease.	Dehydration.
Middle ear infections.	Diabetes.	Multiple sclerosis.
Gastroesophageal reflux.	Rotovirus.	Gastrointestinal illnesses.
Necrotizing enterocolitis.	Infantile hernia.	Iron-deficiency anemia.
Urinary tract infections.	Tonsillitis.	Leukemia.
Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.	Liver disease.	Celiac disease.
Malocclusion or improper jaw closure.	Appendicitis.	Vitamin E deficiency.
- The baby's first immunization. Mother's milk contains antibodies (immunoglobulins) against communicable diseases that the mother has had, such as measles, mumps, cytomegalovirus, influenza, and herpes simplex virus. These antibodies in the breast milk protect her infant from these infections.

Research has shown that brain development continues rapidly in the first year of a child's life. Substances in breast milk promote optimal brain growth and development of the baby's eyes. Recent research identified stem cells in breast milk. Researchers think their presence may be important in helping the child reach his/her highest development potential.

Any amount of breastfeeding is important to the baby's health. The longer the nursing continues, the longer the list of benefits.

Learn more about breastfeeding by:

- Reading such books as:
 - *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* – La Leche League International.
 - *Nursing Mother, Working Mother* – Gale Pryor.
 - *The Nursing Mother's Companion* – Kathleen Huggins.
- Attending a breastfeeding class. To register, call 623-580-5800 or visit the Prenatal Education Events page on HonorHealth.com.
- Talking to other women who are breastfeeding their babies. Ask for their tips on how to make it easy to do almost anywhere. Learn what makes breastfeeding such a wonderful experience. If you don't know any breastfeeding moms, a good place to meet them is at:
 - HonorHealth Moms on the Move (M.O.M.) support group. MOM groups discuss many topics of interest to new moms, including breastfeeding.
 - A La Leche League meeting. La Leche League is an international breastfeeding support group. A list of local support groups can be found at www.lllofaz.org.
- Discussing any other questions you may have about breastfeeding by calling the Center for Breastfeeding Support. The lactation consultants and nursing staff are available to help mothers discover and succeed at the wonderful experience of breastfeeding.

References

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2005). Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk. *Pediatrics*, 115(2), 496-506.
- Madden, C. (2/11/08). Breast milk contains stem cells. Available at sciencealert/news/au/20081102-16879-2.html.
- Riordan, Jan & Auerbach, Kathleen G. (2005). *Breastfeeding and Human Lactation* (3rd Ed). Boston: Jones & Bartlett.