

Questions Mothers Ask About Breastfeeding

Until the 1930's, breastfeeding was almost universally practiced. At that time, infant formula, made from modified cow's milk, was developed and became a symbol of an affluent and technological society. This led to a dramatic decline in breastfeeding. Since the 1960's, studies have repeatedly proven the benefits of breastfeeding and the superiority of human milk over infant formula. With the support of physicians, nurses, dieticians and other medical professionals, as well as parents, breastfeeding has enjoyed a resurgence to again be the preferred way to feed a baby.

Why is Breast Milk the Best Choice?

- ♥ **Your baby will most likely be healthier!** Formula fed babies have more colds, diarrhea, ear infections, urinary infections and hospital admissions. Research shows they also have a higher incidence of diabetes, obesity and certain kinds of cancer in childhood. Formula fed babies also develop more allergies and asthma.
- ♥ **Your baby will most likely be smarter!** Research shows that formula fed babies may have lower IQs.
- ♥ **Breast milk contains unique ingredients not found in infant formulas** that are important for growth and development of your baby. Breast milk is all the nutrition your baby will need for the first six months of life. Cows milk, which is the basis of most infant formulas, is ideally suited for the needs of a newborn calf and is substantially altered in an attempt to mimic breast milk.
- ♥ **Breast milk provides your baby with immunities not found in infant formula.** The milk you produce during pregnancy is called colostrum. Colostrum, baby's first milk, is very high in immunity factors. This plays a major role in protection against infection and disease in your newborn. These immunity factors continue to be found in mature breast milk as well.

Why is Breastfeeding Best for Me and My Baby?

- ♥ **Easy and convenient.** Infant formulas require preparation, warming or sterilization of milk or bottles for feeding. When you breastfeed, you will always have just the right amount, at just the right temperature with no bottles to clean!
- ♥ **Enhances bonding** and helps encourage a close relationship with your baby.
- ♥ **Improves mom's recovery time.** The hormones released while breastfeeding cause the uterus to contract and return to its previous size. When you breastfeed immediately and frequently after delivery, bleeding is reduced since your uterus is already beginning to contract and reduce in size.
- ♥ **Helps prevent maternal illnesses.** Mothers who do not breastfeed have a higher incidence of anemia (low iron levels), breast cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer and osteoporosis in later life.
- ♥ **Improves baby's future dental health.** The type of suckling babies use with bottles leads to higher incidence of severe dental problems and more orthodontic corrections later in life.
- ♥ **Saves money.** Using infant formula for the first year of your baby's life can cost as much as \$1,500-\$1,800! That doesn't even include the cost of bottles, artificial nipples, liners or sterilizers! Remember, your breast milk is free!

Does the Size of My Breasts Matter?

No! Almost every mother can make an adequate supply of breast milk whether they have small or large breasts. Size has more to do with the amount of fatty tissue present than the amount of milk glands. Your milk producing tissue expands significantly during your pregnancy. Only a very small percentage of mothers do not have enough milk producing tissue.

Will Breastfeeding Cause Me to Lose My Figure?

No! Quite the contrary! Breastfeeding has the extra advantage of helping you get back to your pre-pregnancy figure faster. Your body will "burn" approximately 500-700 extra calories each day in the production of breast milk for your baby.

While you may be concerned about losing the weight you gained during pregnancy, gradual weight loss over 6-12 months is recommended. Eating a well-balanced diet and avoiding the "empty calories" found in sweets and fatty foods should help you to lose weight. You can also participate in your favorite activities, sports and exercise programs of stretching and low impact aerobics when your physician gives the approval. Poor diet and lack of exercise can adversely affect your recovery.

Your breast size should increase during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Breasts return to their pre-pregnancy state well after weaning. While your breasts may become less firm, this is a result of pregnancy - not breastfeeding.

How Do I Know if Breastfeeding Will Work for Me?

Give it a try! You may find it is easier than you thought. Do not let any negative experiences of your friends or relatives mislead or give you any doubts. Every mother and baby is different and unique.

Educate yourself. Take a pre-natal breastfeeding class from your local hospital, Board Certified Lactation Consultant or childbirth educator and do some reading. Attend a local La Leche League meeting. There are many good books and information sheets that can help you get off to a good start.

Some examples include:

- ♥ **The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding** by La Leche League International
- ♥ **The Nursing Mothers Companion** by Kathleen Huggins, RN, MS
- ♥ **Dr. Mom's Guide for Breastfeeding** by Maryann Neifert, MD
- ♥ **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Breastfeeding** by Anne P. Mark, BSN, RN, IBCLC

Other Ameda Answer Sheets:

What Breastfeeding Information Should I Know Before My Baby Is Born?

How Do I Hold My Baby While Breastfeeding?

How Do I Know My Baby Is Getting Enough Breast Milk?

Why Do My Breasts Hurt?

Can I Be Discreet When Feeding My Baby?

Yes! You can breastfeed very inconspicuously in the presence of other people - with just a little practice. Try these tips to help you feel more comfortable.

- ♥ Wear clothing that you can unbutton from the bottom, lifts up from the waist or is specially made with openings in the fabric for you to breastfeed.
- ♥ Practice in front of a mirror at home. Then you will be able to see what you need to do to maintain your modesty.
- ♥ Turn your back to onlookers to get started, then use a blanket or shawl over your shoulder and chest to conceal your breast. Many onlookers will think that you are just cuddling your baby.
- ♥ You may choose to seek out a private place for feedings. Many stores have a quiet corner in a lounge, or even a dressing room that you could use. Some women find their car a comfortable, private place.
- ♥ Breastfeeding in public has become a hot issue in the United States recently and several states have enacted legislation protecting your right to breastfeed in public places. Check with your local jurisdiction to see what legal protection breastfeeding mothers have in your area.

Do I Need to Follow a Special Diet?

No! Well-balanced meals with a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains and meats (or meat substitutes) will be fine. Even mothers who do not eat well will produce good quality breast milk. If there are not enough nutrients to go around, you will be the one who is short-changed, not your breast milk. For more detailed information, see the information sheet "What Should a Breastfeeding Mother Eat?" It is important to drink whenever you feel thirsty. You will want extra fluids because you will be thirstier. Have water and fruit or vegetable juices handy.

Caffeine and alcohol intake should be limited. Both pass into breast milk and can affect your baby as well as the amount of breast milk you produce.

Some mothers find that certain foods they eat cause a problem for their babies. Foods that may give you gas, such as cabbage, beans or broccoli, may do the same to your baby. If you need help sorting out which, if any, foods are bothering your baby, seek help from a lactation consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider.

What Can Dads Do to Help?

Fathers play an important role in supporting the breastfeeding mother and there are many ways that he can help. Encouragement and reassurance are very important to your success.

- ♥ He can bring your baby to you at feeding times.
- ♥ He can learn about breastfeeding with you.
- ♥ He can help you check that your baby's latch-on to your breast is correct.

Dads can participate in the care of their babies in many ways:

- ♥ Holding, cuddling and playing
- ♥ Bathing, dressing, changing diapers
- ♥ Calming baby when she is fussy
- ♥ Walking with baby while wearing a soft baby carrier

Now is a great time for fathers to give a hand with household tasks, laundry, cooking and shopping to allow you more time with your baby. Anything more that a dad can do contributes to the success of breastfeeding.

Will Breastfeeding Confine Me to Home?

No! During the first months when babies need to be breastfed often you can carry on with your usual activities, just bring your baby along. Breastfed babies are very portable. You've already got your supply of milk handy, just grab your diaper bag when you leave!

As your baby gets older and the time between feedings spaces out, you may be able to accomplish your errands between feedings. At other times you may need to leave your baby and some of your pumped breast milk with a caregiver. Either way, you can resume breastfeeding when you return home.

I Am Going Back to Work or School. Should I Even Start Breastfeeding?

Yes! Any amount of breast milk that your baby receives is valuable. You may find that breastfeeding is rewarding enough that you would like to continue.

More mothers are finding that it is possible to continue to provide breast milk while working or going to school. You can pump your milk and leave it for your baby when you are not there. Get additional details from the Ameda Answer Sheet on "How Do I Combine Breastfeeding and Working."

You will undoubtedly find that the close relationship you have with your breastfed baby will become important to you if you spend time away from your baby. Breastfeeding can be the consistent activity that helps you and your baby reunite after being apart.

There are also several websites with valuable information. Run a search with the word "Breastfeeding" and you will be sure to find several informative web sites.

If you find that you experience problems such as sore nipples, engorgement, are worried that your baby is not getting enough milk, or if you have any other concerns, get some help. Talk to a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider for one-on-one assistance. Do not hesitate or wait! Most problems can be remedied quickly if you get help.

Please remember that this is general breastfeeding information only and does not replace the advice of your health care provider. If you have a problem that you are unable to resolve quickly, seek help immediately.

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References on File.