

Breast-Feeding

Agatha M. Thrash, M.D.

Preventive Medicine

The custom of breast-feeding is coming in again, much to the benefit of society. Breast-fed infants have superior advantages in many ways. Mothers who breast-feed also have many advantages. Let us take a look at some of these advantages.

The mother will have her uterus to return to a small size and normal position more readily if she breast-feeds. Some studies indicate that mothers have less breast cancer if they engage in breast-feeding. There is absence of menstruation when a woman is breast-feeding, caused by various hormones from the pituitary. The fewer total number of menstrual periods a woman has during her reproductive lifetime, the smaller the risk of breast cancer. Breast milk is always sterile, always ready, always warm, always available—no bottles, no sterilizing, no brushes, no formulas. A big advantage for the mother is that she is forced to stop her work and take some needed rest at least during the time that the baby nurses.

Advantages to the baby include a stimulus to the hormone systems and an increase in blood sugar, even from birth to six hours. Human breast milk contains a strong growth stimulating substance. The calcium content of cow's milk is 3 to 4 times as high as human milk. There is a complex dissimilarity of amino acids which cannot be reproduced in the laboratory or formula factory. Human milk contains up to 6 times as much vitamin E as does dairy milk, and about twice as much selenium; both of these are anti-oxidants, felt by many to reduce the rate of aging.

Only breast milk should be given to a child until he is six months of age. In most instances, giving solid foods before this age represents a type of forced feeding. An infant should be permitted to stop nursing or eating at the earliest indication of willingness to stop. Breast-fed infants do not even need water, even when living in hot humid climates.

All infants fed on cow's milk develop circulating antigens against milk protein in their blood, indicating a resistance of the body to milk. Eczema, colic, asthma, runny nose, even psychological disturbances have been linked with the use of cow's milk. In many instances, even if a mother drinks cow's milk, the baby can develop colic. Constipation or diarrhea are also common. Many of these disorders stop promptly when milk is withdrawn. Formula-fed infants have smaller iron stores than do breast-fed infants. There are fewer infections in breast-fed babies, because breast milk contains an anti-infection property against viruses as well as against bacteria. Breast-fed babies have greater resistance to gastrointestinal disorders. Mother's milk helps a baby not to develop a high blood cholesterol level. Both the mother and the infant can attain a more ideal weight if the infant is breast-fed.

An amino acid called taurine stimulates brain development. Taurine is twice as high in breast milk as in dairy milk. The calf, of course, does not need to develop a large brain.

There are times when one hears that cancer viruses or pesticide residues may be present in breast milk. Such reports are an attempt to scare a mother out of breast-feeding and do not take into consideration the fact that both of these disadvantages are found in cow's milk to a more serious degree.

Breast-feeding is inexpensive. There is 90% efficiency in converting calories that a mother eats to calories for her milk. If she must produce 715 calories, she needs to eat only 786 calories to remain in balance. Nevertheless, she can easily lose weight by a slight restriction in her dietary intake, since she will be losing quite a lot of calories in the form of milk.

Now, if all these physical benefits were not adequate to convince you to breast-feed your infant, let me mention the psychological advantages of breast-feeding your infant. There is better maternal-infant bonding and far less of the rising incidence of child abuse.

For more information contact:

Uchee Pines Lifestyle Center

30 Uchee Pines Road #75

Seale, Alabama 36875

Tel. 334-855-4764

www.uchepines.org

