5 Reasons Why Brestfeeding is Best

By Kathleen Doherty, Lactation Consultant at Morton Hospital

While you've likely heard it from many sources, you may be wondering, "is breastfeeding really that much better for my baby?" According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the answer is yes.

According to the AAP, breastfeeding offers crucial health benefits (for both mom and baby) that you can't get elsewhere. The organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about six months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, with continuation of breastfeeding for one year or longer as mutually desired by mother and infant.

Here are five great reasons to breastfeed your baby:

- 1. Breastfeeding offers superior nutrition. With just the right amount of protein, sugar, fat and water, breast milk offers a naturally complete food that your baby digests easily. Human milk also contains important enzymes, amino acids and antibodies, components that formula can't duplicate.
- 2. Breastfeeding means fewer illnesses. The antibodies found in breast milk help protect babies from bacteria and viruses and can mean fewer trips to the doctor. Breastfed babies are less likely to suffer from inflammatory bowel disease, celiac disease, asthma and allergies, respiratory illnesses and infections, pneumonia and even sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- 3. Breastfeeding helps response to immunizations. Breastfed babies' immune systems have a better response to their immunizations against polio, tetanus, diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae (a common cause of meningitis and pneumonia) and respiratory syncytial virus infection.
- 4. Breastfeeding combats obesity. Breastfeeding allows a baby to feed according to his or her own needs and appetite. Bottle-fed babies are more likely to be overfed. Rates of obesity in breastfed infants are significantly lower.
- 5. Breastfeeding saves work, time and money. Without all those bottles and nipples to wash and sterilize or formula to prepare, refrigerate and warm, you could use those extra hours each day to catch up on your sleep. Also, formula is expensive.

Of special benefit to mom:

Nursing mothers enjoy some worthy bonuses as well. Breastfeeding can:

- help you recover from childbirth faster by releasing hormones that speed up the uterus' return to normal size;
- reduce stress by forcing you to stop, sit and rest;
- lower your breast and ovarian cancer risk, according to some studies;
- and most importantly, create a special bond between you and your baby

Breastfeeding is an instinct for the baby but not for us, so let us help you have a great experience. At Morton Hospital's Maternity Center, we do everything we can to support the breastfeeding efforts of new mothers. If you're struggling with breastfeeding, don't give up! We can help. We offer many resources to new moms, including lactation consultation, free Feeding Your Baby classes twice a month and a weekly breastfeeding support group. In addition, I am personally available to offer support through the Morton Hospital Milk Line (508-828-7825).

Learn more about our Maternity Center services as well as our breastfeeding classes and support services online at www.steward.org/Morton.



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