



# The Bronx Health Link

## Benefits of Breastfeeding

There are many benefits to breastfeeding. Even if you are able to do it for only a short time, your baby's immune system can benefit from breast milk. Breastfeeding benefits the mother, her baby, and others.

### Benefits for Baby

Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants. A mother's milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein that is needed for a baby's growth and development. Most babies find it easier to digest breast milk than they do formula.

As a result, breastfed infants grow exactly the way they should. They are more likely to gain less extra weight. This may result in being less overweight later in life.

Premature babies do better when breastfed compared to premature

babies who are fed formula.

Breastfed babies score slightly higher on IQ tests, especially babies who were born prematurely.



### Benefits for Mom

Nursing uses up extra calories, making it easier to lose the pounds of pregnancy. It also helps the uterus to get back to its original size and lessens any bleeding a woman may have after giving birth.

Breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding (no feeding with formula), delays the return of normal ovulation and menstrual cycles.

However, you should still talk with your doctor or nurse about birth control choices.

Breastfeeding lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, and possibly the risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis after menopause.

Breastfeeding makes your life easier. It saves time and money. You do not have to buy, measure, and mix formula. There are no bottles to warm in the middle of the night! A mother can give her baby immediate satisfaction by providing her breast milk when the baby is hungry.

Breastfeeding requires a mother to take some quiet relaxed time for herself and her baby.

Breastfeeding can help a mother bond with her baby. Physical contact is

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### Special points of interest:

- ◆ *Should you breastfeed*
- ◆ *Some challenges of breastfeeding*
- ◆ *Answering your questions on breastfeeding*
- ◆ *How your lifestyle might affect your breastfeeding*

# When should a mother avoid breastfeeding?

Health professionals agree that human milk provides the most complete form of nutrition for infants, including premature and sick newborns. However, there are rare exceptions when human milk is not recommended. In certain cases, a doctor will need to give advice on whether a woman should interrupt or stop breastfeeding because of illness or because of chemicals or drugs in her system.

Breastfeeding is NOT advisable if one or more of the following conditions is true:

- the infant has galactosemia, a genetic metabolic disorder

- the mother has HIV
- the mother is taking antiretroviral (anti-HIV) medications
- the mother has untreated, active tuberculosis
- the mother is infected with human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I or type II
- the mother is using or is dependent upon an illegal drug
- the mother is taking cancer chemotherapy, or
- the mother is undergoing radiation therapy

Information compiled from:  
*Centers for Disease Control,*



## **HEALTH RISKS: NOT BREASTFEEDING**

Breast milk has antibodies in it to help protect infants from bacteria and viruses. Studies show that babies who are not breastfed for 6 months—without adding other liquids—are more likely to develop a wide range of infectious diseases like ear infections, diarrhea, and breathing illness. Also, infants who are not breastfed have a 21% higher rate of death after the first month of life.

Some studies suggest that infants who are not breastfed have higher rates of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and higher rates of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, lymphoma, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, overweight and obesity, high cholesterol and asthma.

Babies who are not breastfed are sick more often and have more doctor's visits.

# Benefits of Breastfeeding

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Important to newborns and can help them feel more secure, warm and comforted.

Breastfeeding mothers may have increased self-confidence and feelings of closeness with their baby.

## **Benefits for Society**

Breastfeeding saves on health care costs. Breastfed infants typically need fewer sick care visits, prescriptions, and hospitalizations.

Breastfeeding helps the workforce because breastfeeding mothers miss less work, as their

Breastfeeding is better for our environment because there is less trash and plastic waste compared to that produced by formula cans and bottle supplies.

Information compiled from:  
*National Women's Health Info Ctr.*  
[www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding)

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# Breastfeeding: Frequently Asked Questions

## How do I know that my baby is getting enough milk from breastfeeding?

In the first few days, when you're in the hospital, your baby should stay with you in your room if there are no complications. The baby will be sleepy. Don't expect the baby to wake you up when he or she is hungry. You will have to wake the baby every one to two hours to feed him or her. At first you will be feeding your baby *colostrum*, your first milk that is very special thick yellowish milk. Even though it looks like only a small amount, this is the only food your baby needs.

In the beginning, you can expect your baby to lose some weight. This is very normal and is not from breastfeeding. As long as the baby doesn't lose more than 7 to 10% of his or her birth weight during the first 3 to 5 days, he is getting enough to eat.

You can tell your baby is getting enough milk by keeping track of the number of wet and dirty diapers. In the first few days, when your milk is low in amount (it is still high in nutrients) your baby will have only 1 or 2 wet diapers a day. After your milk supply has increased, your baby should have 5 to 6 wet diapers and 3 to 4 dirty diapers every day. Consult your pediatrician if you are concerned about your baby's weight gain.

You should visit your pediatrician between 3 to 5 days after your baby's birth, and then again at 2 to 3 weeks of age.

In the early weeks, you should wake your baby to feed if 4 hours have passed since the beginning of the last feeding.



## Can I breastfeed if my breasts are small?

Of course! Breast size is not related to the ability to produce milk for a baby. Most women, with all sizes of breasts, can make enough milk for their babies.

## Will breastfeeding keep me from getting pregnant?

When you breastfeed, your ovaries can stop releasing eggs, making it harder for you to get pregnant. Your periods can also stop. But, there are no guarantees that you will not get pregnant while nursing. The only way to make sure you don't get pregnant is to use birth control. If you want

to use a birth control pill while breastfeeding, the safest type is the "mini-pill."

## Will breastfeeding keep me at home all the time?

Not at all! You can breastfeed no matter where you are because you don't have to bring feeding equipment like bottles, water, or formula. Your baby is all you need.

Even if you want to breastfeed in private, you can find a woman's room or fitting room. If you want to go out without your baby, you can pump your milk before and leave it for someone else to give your baby while you are gone.

## Can I still breastfeed when I go back to work?

Yes! You can do it! New York State law requires employers to allow you to breastfeed at your job. For more information, call the Women's Healthline at 311.

Breastfeeding keeps you connected to your baby, even when you are away. Employers and co-workers benefit because breastfeeding moms often need less time off for sick babies.

If you plan to have your baby drink a bottle of breast milk while you are at work, you can introduce your baby to a bottle when he or she is around four weeks old. Otherwise, the baby might

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# How Lifestyle Affects Breast Milk

Your lifestyle can have an effect on your breast milk, and therefore on your baby. It's important to take care of yourself so you can provide the best care to your baby. This includes getting enough rest and proper nutrition so you have enough energy to take care of your baby and avoid illness.

Some women think that when they are sick, they should not breastfeed. Common illnesses, like colds, flu, or diarrhea, can't be passed through breast milk. In fact, if you are sick, your breast milk will have antibodies in it. These antibodies will help protect your baby from getting the same sickness.

Here are some other lifestyle issues that affect breast milk:

## Diet

If you have a good diet, you will produce healthy breast milk for your baby, even if you don't eat well all the time. Women often try to improve their diets while they are pregnant. Continue your improved diet after your baby is born, will help you stay healthy.

Women whose diets have been very low in vitamins and minerals may produce milk that is lower than normal in nutrients. To help the nutrient levels in their milk return to normal, these mothers can improve their diets by taking vitamin and mineral supplements.

## Fluids

Many women think they have to

drink a lot of fluids to have a good milk supply. This is untrue. You need to drink enough fluids to stay well hydrated. We should all be drinking 8 glasses of fluid every day. When you're breastfeeding you need to drink even more than this. If you feel thirsty, this means you're already dehydrated. If your urine is dark and has a strong smell, this is also a sign that you are not drinking enough.

## Caffeine

Caffeine is actually a drug, perhaps the most widely used of all. Drinking a lot of caffeine (more than two to three 8-ounce cups of coffee or five to six 8-ounce cups to tea per day) can cause the baby not to sleep well and be fussy.

If you drink less caffeine than this, it should not be a problem, but pay attention to how your baby is responding. Cut back on caffeine if your baby seems to be fussy and not able to sleep well.

## Food Allergies

Sometimes a baby may have a reaction to something you eat (like spicy foods, foods that can cause gas, or dairy products). Symptoms of an allergy include diarrhea, rash, fussiness, gas, dry skin, green stools with mucus, or the baby pulling up his/her knees and screaming. This doesn't mean the baby is allergic to your milk. If you stop eating whatever is bothering your baby, the problem usually goes away on its own.

## Smoking

If you smoke tobacco, it is best for you and your baby if you try to quit as soon as possible. Besides the major risks to the baby's lungs from breathing the smoke, nicotine can be transferred to breast milk, leading to excessive crying by the baby and may even affect the amount of milk you produce.

## Illegal Drugs

Some drugs, such as PCP, can make the baby high. Other drugs, such as heroin, can cause the baby to sleep poorly, have tremors, and vomit. If you are having a hard time quitting, ask your doctor or a trusted friend for help.

## Alcohol

If you breastfeed, you should avoid drinking alcohol. Alcohol does get to your baby through breast milk. The more alcohol you drink, the more it will affect the baby you are breastfeeding.

Moderate to heavy drinking (2 or more drinks per day) can interfere with the body's ability to make and give milk to the baby. It also can harm the baby's skill in using muscles and cause slow weight gain.

Light drinking or an occasional drink is OK, but avoid breastfeeding for two hours after the drink.

## Medications

Always talk with your doctor before taking any medications. Most

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# Frequently Asked Questions

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not accept the bottle later on. Once your baby is comfortable taking a bottle, it is a good idea to have dad or another family member offer a bottle of pumped breast milk on a regular basis so the baby stays in practice.

Before you return to work, tell your employer that you would like to continue breastfeeding once you return to work, and ask what their policies are about where and when you can do that.

Don't be afraid to request a clean and private area where you can pump your milk. If you don't have your own office space, you may want to ask to use a supervisor's office during certain times. Or you can ask to have a clean, clutter-free corner of a storage room. All you need is a chair, a small table, and an outlet if you are using an

electric pump. You can lock the door and place a small sign on it that asks for some privacy.



After pumping, you can refrigerate your milk, place it in a cooler, or freeze it for the baby to be fed later. If you don't have access to a refrigerator, you can leave it at room temperature: 66°-72°F for up to ten hours or 72°-79°F for up to six hours.

**How much are breastfeeding pumps? What kind will I need?**

Breast pumps range in price from under \$50 (manual pumps) to over \$200 (electrical pumps that include a carrying case and an insulated section for storing milk containers). If you're only going to be away from your baby a few hours a week, then you can buy a manual pump. If you're going back to work, it is worth investing in a good-quality electric pump.

Some pumps can be purchased at baby supply stores or general department stores. The New York City Breastfeeding Alliance (646-229-7029) can make pumps available at a discount.

**How can I breastfeed discreetly in public?**

You can breastfeed discreetly in public by wearing clothes that

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## How Lifestyle Affects Breast Milk

*(Cont'd from previous pg.)*

medications pass into your milk in small amounts.

In general, when breastfeeding the following are safe to take, but talk to your doctor first:

- acetaminophen (like Tylenol)
- antibiotics
- epilepsy medications (take Primidone with caution)
- moderate amounts of caffeine

- decongestants
- ibuprofen (like Advil)
- insulin
- quinine
- thyroid medicines
- progestin-only birth control pills (the "mini-pill").

Many medications are NOT safe to take when breastfeeding. For more specific information, talk to your doctor.

Info compiled from *National Women's Health Info Ctr.*, [www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding) and other sources.



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# Coping with Breastfeeding Problems

Some women breastfeed without problems. Especially for first-time mothers, it is natural for minor problems to arise in the beginning. The good news is that most problems can be overcome with a little help and support. Some more serious problems may require you to see a doctor.

Here are some of the most common problems you might face and some solutions to overcome them.

## Sore Nipples

Breastfeeding should not hurt. There may be some tenderness at first, but it should slowly go away. Poor latch-on and position are the major causes of sore nipples because the baby is probably not getting enough of the areola (brown area) into his or her mouth.

Solutions:

- To lessen soreness, **your baby's mouth should be open wide** with as much of the areola in his mouth as possible.
- **Don't delay feedings, and try to relax** so you release milk easily.
- **Change positions each time you nurse.** This puts the pressure on a different part of the nipple.
- **After nursing, squeeze some breast milk and gently rub it on your nipples.** Human milk has natural healing properties and skin

softeners to soothe them.

Also try letting your nipples air-dry after feeding, or wear a soft-cotton shirt.

- **Avoid wearing bras or clothes that put pressure on nipples.**
- **Change nursing pads.**
- **Washing with clean water** is all that is necessary to keep your breasts clean.
- **Warm moist compresses can help sore nipples.**
- La Leche League recommends **Lansinoh, a lanolin product made especially for sore nipples.**

## Engorgement

It is normal for your breasts to become larger, heavier, and more tender when they begin making more milk. This fullness may turn into engorgement, when your breasts feel very hard and painful. Engorgement is the result of the milk building up, and usually happens during the 3rd to 5th day after birth.

Solutions:

- **Make sure baby is latched on and positioned correctly.**
- **Avoid bottles and overusing pacifiers.**
- **Try pumping a little milk to soften the breast, areola, and nipple before breastfeeding, or massage and apply heat.**
- **Use cold compresses in between feedings. Some**

**women use cabbage**

**leaves.** Although there's only limited evidence that they work, many women find they reduce pain. Make sure to cut a hole for your nipple, apply the leaves directly to your breasts, and wear them inside your bra. Remove when they wilt and replace.

- **If at work, pump your milk on the same schedule that the baby breastfed at home.**
- **Get enough rest and proper nutrition and fluids.**
- **Wear a well-fitting, supportive bra that is not too tight.**

Engorgement can lead to plugged ducts or a breast infection, so it is important to try to prevent it from happening. If treated properly, it usually should only last for one to two days.

## Plugged Ducts and Breast Infection (Mastitis)

It is common for many women who breastfeed to have a plugged duct in the breast. A plugged milk duct feels like a tender, sore lump in the breast. You will not have a fever or other symptoms. It happens when a milk duct does not properly drain, and becomes inflamed. Then, pressure builds up and surrounding tissue becomes swollen. A plugged duct usually only occurs in one breast at a time.

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## Breastfeeding Problems

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A breast infection (mastitis), on the other hand, is soreness or a lump in the breast accompanied by feeling run down or very achy. Some women with a breast infection also have nausea and vomiting. You may have yellowish discharge from the nipple, or the breast feels warm or hot to the touch and appears pink or red. Like a plugged duct, it usually occurs in one breast.

Solutions:

- **Apply heat to increase circulation to the sore area and speed healing.** You can use a heating pad or a hot water bottle. It also helps to massage the area, starting behind the message the sore spot in a circular motion and move toward the nipple.
- **Breastfeed often on the affected side.** This helps loosen the plug, keeps the milk moving freely, and the breast from becoming overly full.
- **Rest.** Get extra sleep or relax with your feet up. Often a plugged duct or breast infection is the first sign that a mother is doing too much and is very tired.
- **Wear a well-fitting supportive bra** that is not too tight, since this add pressure on the ducts.

If you do not feel better within a day of trying these steps or your symptoms worsen, call your doctor.

## Thrush

Thrush (yeast) is a fungal infection that can form on your nipples or in your breast. If you have sore nipples that last more than a few days even after you make sure your baby's latch and positioning is correct, or you suddenly get sore nipples after several weeks of un-painful nursing, you could have thrush. Some signs include pink, flaky, shiny, itchy or cracked nipples, or deep pink and blistered nipples. You also could have shooting pains deep in the breast during or after feedings.



The infection also can form in your baby's mouth from having contact with your nipples, and appear as little white spots on the inside of the cheeks, gums, or tongue. It also can appear as a diaper rash that won't go away by using regular ointment.

Solutions:

- **You can get medication from your doctor**, usually an ointment for the nipples, and the baby can be given a liquid for his/her mouth, and/or an ointment for the diaper rash.
- One of the oldest but most effective treatments for thrush that does not require a prescription is **the herbal gentian violet**. It works quickly and is inexpensive. You can buy it over the counter. It

is painted in the baby's mouth and on the nipples with a clean ear swab. The downside is that it is messy and it can stain everything. After the inside of the baby's mouth is coated purple, you can put your baby to breast. This will transfer the gentian violet to your nipple and areola. If your nipples are not purple, you can add more gentian violet with the ear swab until they are covered. You can do this once each day for up to one week.

- **If the thrush does not improve, you should see a doctor** and get a prescription for an anti-fungal medicine that is safe for both you and your baby.
- Thrush may take several weeks to cure, so **it is important to try not to spread it**. Don't freeze milk that you pump while you have thrush. Change disposable nursing pads often and wash any towels or clothing that come in contact with the yeast in very hot water.
- **Wear a clean bra every day.**
- **Wash your hands often.**
- **Boil any pacifiers, bottle nipples, or toys your baby puts in his or her mouth once a day for 20 minutes.** After one week of treatment, discard pacifiers and nipples and buy new ones.

Information compiled from:  
*National Women's Health Info Ctr.*,  
[www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding)

## Monthly Newsletter

THE BRONX HEALTH LINK, INC.



851 Grand Concourse  
Room 914  
Bronx, NY 10451  
Tel: 718-590-2648  
[www.bronxhealthlink.org](http://www.bronxhealthlink.org)

We're on the Web!  
[www.BronxHealthLink.org](http://www.BronxHealthLink.org)

## Our Mission

The Bronx Health Link, Inc. (TBHL) is a Bronx-wide network of diverse service providers, organizations, coalitions, agencies, community stakeholders, residents, and students. We serve the Bronx and NYC in various ways, including as a clearinghouse for information and referral, providing technical assistance as needed, and broadcasting information through the TBHL Email Communication Network, which has over 500 subscribers. The daily E-Comm provides e-mail messages on a wide scope of information, including grant and job opportunities (Mon.), public health and medical access news (Tues.), community and provider events and resources (Wed.), medical research and safety alerts (Thurs.), and news on maternal, infant, child, adolescent, and women's reproductive health research, news, and resources (Fri.).

Our mission is to improve community health by:

- identifying emerging community health issues;
- increasing communication to better serve the community;
- providing information to providers and community residents on services and resources; and
- increasing access to available services and programs.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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allow easy access to your breasts, such as button-down shirts. By draping a receiving blanket over your baby and your breast, most people won't even realize that you are breastfeeding. Nurse the baby before he/she becomes fussy so that you can get in a comfortable position to nurse. Many stores have women's lounges or dressing rooms, if you want to slip into one of those to breastfeed.

### If I decide to breastfeed, is there a right way to do so?

You can prevent the most

common challenges or problems by following three important tips about breastfeeding:

1. Nurse early and often. Try to breastfeed your baby within the first hour after birth. Newborns need to nurse frequently, at least every two hours, and not on a strict schedule. This stimulates your breasts to produce plenty of milk.

2. Breastfeed when the baby wants it. Since breast milk is more easily digested than formula, breastfed babies eat more often than bottle-fed babies. Babies nurse less often as they get

older and start solid foods. Watch your baby, not the clock, for signs of hunger, such as being more alert or active, mouthing (putting hands or fists to mouth and making sucking motion with mouth), or rooting (turning head in search of nipple). Crying is a late sign of hunger.

3. Nurse with the nipple and the areola (brown area surrounding the nipple) in the baby's mouth, not just the nipple.

Information compiled from:  
*National Women's Health Information Center*  
[www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding)