

Why should I give breast milk to my baby?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend mother's milk as the ideal food for babies.

PROTECTION:

- The milk you produce will have specific antibodies that protect your baby from germs and viruses that are in the hospital and intensive care nursery.
- The antibodies in your milk protect your baby from illnesses and infections that affect premature and sick babies. Babies are born with very limited defenses of their own. Premature babies are especially at risk for infections.
- Your baby will be at lower risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Breast milk helps protect premature babies from eye problems such as retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), and intestinal infections such as necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC).

HEALTH:

- You have the chance to make a big impact on your baby's health now and in the future.
- Your baby may be less likely to have diabetes, obesity, meningitis, asthma, allergies, heart disease, high blood pressure, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, and certain cancers, and may have fewer ear infections, or other respiratory infections.
- Nothing can match breast milk, no matter how many vitamins, minerals or nutrients are added to a commercial formula. Commercial formulas, which are made from cow's milk or soy, are NOT equal to your breastmilk. There is an increased chance of illness if your baby receives formula instead of your breast milk.
- Breastfed babies are sick less frequently which means fewer trips to the doctor and less time off work.

GROWTH:

- The proteins found in your milk are perfectly suited for your baby. Your baby has the enzymes needed to digest those proteins very easily and completely, so more energy can be used for growth rather than digestion.
- Breastfed babies have been shown to have higher intelligence, better brain development, lung development, eye development, better emotional development, and a warm emotional bond with their mother.

BONUS BENEFITS FOR MOM:

- Breastfeeding is associated with lower stress levels.
- Mothers who breastfeed their babies have a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancers.
- You may lose your pregnancy weight faster.
- You can lower your risk of anemia, high blood pressure, heart disease, and osteoporosis (weak bones).
- You can save natural resources and reduce waste in landfills.
- Breast milk is FREE! Think of all the things you can save for if you don't have to buy formula, or take your baby to the doctor as much!

The lactation consultants and nurses at WakeMed are here to help you. We will be happy to assist you with positioning your baby to feed, expressing your milk with a pump, or answering any questions you may have.