

Breastfeeding Is Good For Mom, Too

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We've all heard about why "breast is best" for baby, but what's in it for you? A lot, as it turns out.

When you're considering whether nursing is going to be the right choice for you and your baby, what you probably hear most often is that breast milk is best for nourishing your baby. But breastfeeding an infant is a significant commitment, and it's only right to take a look at what's in it for you. This isn't selfish – it's realistic. So let's take a look at what you have to gain by joining the ranks of nursing mothers.

Show Me the Money

Let me start by saying that there *are* costs associated with breastfeeding. At the very least you'll need nursing bras (believe me, your prepregnancy bras are not going to do the job) and perhaps a couple nursing tops.

When you breastfeed your baby, however, you won't have to buy formula – to the tune of about \$1,200 in the first year alone. You also won't be spending nearly as much money on visits to the doctor, on trips to the pharmacy for prescriptions, and admissions to the hospital, because breastfed babies are much healthier overall than those who are fed formula. In fact, according to a 2001 USDA report, a minimum of "\$3.6 billion must be paid each year to treat diseases and conditions that are preventable by breastfeeding."

Also, if you plan on working outside the home after your baby is born, you'll be able to save your sick days for when *you're* sick and those vacation days for actual vacations, again, because your baby will be much healthier when breastfed vs. formula-fed.

Perfectly Practical, Practically Perfect

Breast milk is free ... did I already mention that? It bears repeating, given the cost of formula. It's also sterile, the right temperature, and exactly the amount your baby needs. Baby's hungry? Nurse. It really doesn't get any easier than that.

If you want to have more time, less aggravation, and more energy, nursing is the way to go. Believe me, it's no exaggeration. Time you don't spend fooling around with measuring formula, sterilizing bottles, and trudging to the refrigerator in the middle of the night is time you can spend sleeping. When baby gets hungry, all you'll need to do is get the baby and nurse. And more sleep = more energy.

You'll always be good to go when you're a nursing mother. You're going to have to schlep a diaper bag every time you leave the house. However, you're only going to need diapers, wipes, and a spare outfit for baby. Your arms and back will appreciate it, too.

Here's to Your Health

The benefits to your health, both right now and far into the future, are reason enough to choose nursing for you and your baby. There are so many benefits that I'm just going to list them point by point:

- Shed your pregnancy pounds faster, naturally, and safely, and return to your prepregnancy weight more quickly than if you choose formula feeding.
- Return your uterus to its original size more quickly and reduce the risk of postpartum blood loss.
- Delay the return of normal ovulation and menstrual cycles when you are feeding your baby exclusively by breastfeeding, which can help in natural child spacing. (However, please note that exclusive breastfeeding is not an absolutely foolproof method of birth control.) Delayed return of menses can also help reduce the risk of anemia.
- Reduce your insulin needs, if you're a diabetic mother.
- Reduce your risk for breast cancer ... and the beneficial effect is in direct proportion to the cumulative time you devote to nursing your children.
- Reduce your risk for ovarian, endometrial, and uterine cancers.
- Reduce your risk for osteoporosis and bone fracture.
- Make sure that that you take the time to rest, relax, and focus on yourself and your baby which, in the early days, will help your body heal and recover. Later, when you and your baby are more skilled nursing partners, you can choose to focus solely on the task at hand or multitask (i.e., nurse and talk on the phone, hug another child, eat a snack, drink some water or juice, read, jot down some notes, work on the computer, and even prepare meals.
- Bond with your baby – there's nothing like physical contact with your baby to help her feel safe, warm, and comforted ... and for you to feel absolute love.
- Increase your self-confidence and be prone to less postpartum anxiety and depression compared to formula-feeding mothers.
- Experience a wonderful sense of calm, relaxation, and peacefulness, thanks to prolactin, the "mothering hormone." It has been suggested that the effects of prolactin also help deepen the bond between a mother and her child.

And, of course, every time you nurse your baby, you can gaze deep into those eyes that look up into yours and know that, while nursing is wonderful for baby, it's every bit as

wonderful for you, too.

Weimer J. *The economic benefits of breastfeeding: a review and analysis*. Washington, DC: USDA; 2001 Mar. ERS Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. 13.

About the Author

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<http://www.typeamom.net/breastfeeding-is-good-for-mom-too.html>