



# Breastfeeding



*Breastfeeding has multiple long-term and short-term advantages for you and your baby. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), breastfeeding may protect your baby from multiple acute and chronic diseases. Therefore, for the first six months, your baby should be only breastfed, after which, supplemental food should be introduced along with breastfeeding for 12–24 months after birth.*

## **Why is breastfeeding your baby so important?**

Breastfeeding is beneficial for both you and your baby. Some of the advantages are mentioned below:

- For the initial six months, breastfeeding may help in delaying your next pregnancy if you exclusively breastfeed your baby.
- The uterus returns back to its original pre-pregnancy state faster (this process is known as involution).
- The extra fat accumulated in your body during pregnancy is shed.
- The risk of hemorrhage after delivery is significantly reduced.
- The chances of developing breast and ovarian cancer reduces.

- Post-delivery bleeding reduces when a woman starts breastfeeding, which eventually prevents anemia.
- Breast milk has antibodies that will guard your baby against multiple infections and diarrhea.
- Breastfeeding will help in the development of your baby's visual acuity and brain that will enhance your child's willingness to learn.
- It strengthens the bond between you and your baby.
- Your baby can get all the nutrients that he/she requires through breast milk for the initial six months of life.
- Breast milk is easily available, clean and safe.
- Breast milk is inexpensive.
- Water content in breast milk is adequate for your baby to survive even in harsh climates.

Breast milk is high in nutrition, particularly colostrum. After giving birth, a woman produces colostrum, which is bright yellow and has a sticky and dense consistency. Colostrum is extremely necessary for your baby's health because it is a rich source of immunoglobulins and Vitamins A, D, E, and K. The milk produced later (known as transition milk and mature milk) is vital for the baby because they are rich in fats, proteins, minerals, sugar and water.

# When to initiate and how frequently to breastfeed your baby?

You should initiate breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery. This duration is usually within an hour. Babies are biologically ready for breastfeeding soon after birth; thus, it is the right time to initiate it. You should normally breastfeed your baby every 2–3 hrs or when the baby demands for at least 15–20 min. In terms of cues, cooing, restlessness, sighing noises, rapid eye movement, sucking sounds, lip smacking, or hand to mouth movements are feeding signals that you ought to be aware of. Because crying is a late cue, do not wait for your baby to cry before starting breastfeeding.



# How to position your baby for breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is not confined to one position. Good positioning is important for the baby to successfully complete the feed. Some positions for breastfeeding include:

- Hold your baby close to you.
- Your baby should be positioned in a manner that his/her buttock, shoulder, or ears are in one line with the head turned towards you.
- Along with your baby's shoulders and head, support the bottom as well.
- Ensure you hold the breast slightly away from the nipple.
- Place your palm and finger on the chest wall under the breast in a manner that your fingers support the base of your breast.
- Your baby's nose should be closer to the nipple and face should be towards the breast.
- To easily make your baby attach to your breast, you should place your thumb above the breast.

Certain ways to bring your baby towards the breast for feeding are listed below:

- Cue your baby by touching their lips with your nipples.
- Your baby's mouth should be wide open before you initiate the feed.
- Quickly place the baby to the breast from below.

**“Breastfeeding is beneficial for the lifelong health of both the mother and the baby. It provides all the essential nutrients for newborns and develops a healthy bond between mother and child.”**



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