

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Breastfeeding... Is it for me?

Prior to the birth of your baby it is important to think about whether you wish to breastfeed your baby or not. To help you answer this very important question, please read this information on breastfeeding and take time to talk to your partner, midwife, doctor and friends about your decision.

Benefits for the baby

Breast milk supplies all the nutrients babies need for the first six months of their life. Breast milk has a combination of nutrients that are best for brain development, and helps enhance eyesight, speech, jaw development and the immune system. Breast milk changes taste according to what the mother has eaten. Infants who are breastfed therefore tend to take to solids more easily as they are already familiar with some of the flavours through their mother's milk. While infant formula attempts to mimic the composition of breast milk, it cannot as breastmilk composition changes according to your baby's stage of development, the time of day, how long into the feed it is and your menstrual cycle. Breastfeeding is proven to also reduce the risk of many childhood and adult conditions including:

- juvenile diabetes
- urinary tract infections (UTI)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- gastrointestinal illness eg. gastroenteritis
- respiratory illness eg. asthma
- otitis media
- overweight and obesity
- cancer
- inflammatory bowel disease
- diarrhoea or constipation.

Benefits for you

Breastfeeding has many health benefits for mothers.

These benefits include:

- reduced risk of developing osteoporosis
- reduced risk of ovarian and pre menopausal breast cancers
- reduced risk of heart disease
- faster return to your pre pregnancy weight
- natural contraceptive following pregnancy
- delayed return to menstruation.

Other benefits of breastfeeding

- **Convenience** – Breastfeeding can be done any time, any place. There is no need to worry about carrying bottles, teats, formula and water wherever you go.
- **Money saving** – Formula feeding requires the purchase of the formula, bottles, teats and other equipment, whereas breastfeeding doesn't. You may also save on health care costs for your baby due to the reduced risk of many illnesses mentioned previously.
- **Reduced smell** – Children who are breastfed have sweeter smelling poos. An added bonus!
- **Bonding with your baby** - Breastfeeding gives mum and baby time to enjoy each other's company.

Breastfeeding takes time and practice

Breastfeeding is not always easy and can be tiring, especially at first. It is important to understand that difficulties may arise. Be comforted in the knowledge that it will get easier with time. There are many support services that can help you with your questions and concerns. Seeking expert assistance may be necessary

from a Lactation Consultant, Child and Family Health Nurse or the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Breastfeeding is not supposed to hurt

Some discomfort may be experienced in the first few days of breastfeeding however, it should be a rewarding experience and should not hurt. Problems such as incorrect positioning, attachment or sucking can cause pain. These problems can usually be solved if you seek the right help soon from support services in the community.

Your husband will not be excluded if you breastfeed

You may consider that bottle-feeding will enable feeding to be shared with the father, and hence this is the best feeding option. Fathers need to know that cuddling, bathing and playing with your baby are all just as important for a child's healthy development as feeding is, and he can play an important role in these. Supporting you in your decision to breastfeed is equally important. If breast milk is expressed for any reason, your partner can also be of assistance by feeding the baby this milk.

Sources of Further Information

Websites:

Australian Breastfeeding Association

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Australian Department of Health and Aging

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publth-strateg-brfeed-index.htm

Breastfeeding Online

www.breastfeedingonline.com/newman.shtml

Child and Youth Health

www.cyh.com

Karitane

www.karitane.com.au

La Leche League International

www.llli.org/nb.html

Tresillian

www.tresillian.net

Support Associations:

Australian Breastfeeding Association Help line

Ph 1800 686 268

Tresillian Help line

Ph (02) 9878 5255 or 1800 637 357 (outside Sydney Metropolitan Area).

Karitane Help line

Ph (02) 9794 1852 or 1800 677 961 (outside Sydney Metropolitan Area).

Child and family Health Nurse.

See Early Childhood Health Centre in the White Pages.

Remember:

If, despite your best efforts, breastfeeding does not work out, know that you did your best and your baby would have gained benefits from the milk that they have received. Talk with your paediatrician, child health nurse or dietitian about options for infant formula if required.