

# Breast-feeding Is Best!

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Everyone knows this, so why don't more people do it? In this country, only 30 percent of babies are still breast-feeding at six months.

Yes, it can be very difficult to breast-feed your baby, especially in the beginning, and somewhat embarrassing, as well. But there are so many benefits. First, let's go over why breast milk is best.

1. Breast milk is **nutritionally complete**. It has everything the baby needs for the first six months of life. Formula companies are trying very, very hard to replicate breast milk, but still there are many nutrients that breast milk has and formula does not. The one exception to this rule is the possible need for vitamin D supplementation. Talk to your pediatrician about this.

2. Breast milk boosts a baby's **immune system**. The mom passes antibodies that she has made (antibodies are made by the immune system to fight off infections) into the breast milk. So breast-fed babies get fewer coughs, colds, ear infections, vomiting, diarrhea, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, meningitis, etc.

3. Breast-fed-only babies get **fewer serious illnesses** like leukemia, Hodgkin's lymphoma, inflammatory bowel disease, type one diabetes, and SIDS!

4. Breast milk is **free**! Did you know that formula for the first year of a baby's life costs over a thousand dollars?

5. Once breast-feeding is established, which may take several weeks or even a month or so, it becomes **easy**. No bottles, no mixing of powder and water, no warming, no cleanup, no mess, no hassle. Who wants to make a bottle in the middle of the night if you don't have to?

6. The breast milk that mom produces is 500 calories a day, so mom **loses weight** faster!

7. Breast-feeding provides a **special bonding time** between mom and baby that can not be replicated in any other way. In fact, some moms decide to breast-feed longer than they originally intended!

So, if you are an expectant mom and plan on breast-feeding, here is what you need to do:

1. Take a breast-feeding lactation **class** while you are still pregnant. You need to be prepared for what to expect. In the beginning, breast-feeding will hurt! And to many women, it feels weird to have this new creature attached to your body all day. But hang in there; it will get much easier.

2. Read a breast-feeding **book**, like *A New Mother's Guide to Breastfeeding* by the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics), or check out a **web site** like <http://www.lalecheleague.org/>.

3. Find the name and phone number of a **lactation consultant** you can contact when you come home from the hospital, in case you have any questions. Your OB-GYN doctor or pediatrician should be able to give you this information, or you can get it from the providers at your birthing hospital.

4. Talk to everyone you know who has experienced breast-feeding and find out what their experiences have been like. Pick one of these people and ask her if she can be your **nursing buddy**. When you have any questions about nursing your new baby, you can ask her!

5. Consider buying a few **nursing aids**. Get a nursing bra that is one or two cup sizes bigger than your pre-pregnancy size; it should have a front flap that you can detach easily with one hand. A nursing pillow to support the baby on your lap and bring the baby closer to your breasts will help also. My Brest Friend™ is a popular nursing pillow. And you will need a comfortable place at home, like an armchair, couch, or bed, because you will be spending a lot of

time there! Many other nursing aids are also available, like nursing clothes, footstools, rocking/gliding chairs, etc., but these are certainly not required.

6. Tell your employer that you plan on pumping your breast milk at work. You will need time off your schedule and a quiet, private place to do this. In fact, **California state law** requires that employers provide their employees enough time to pump their breast milk at work. Remind your employer of this law!