



What are the Benefits of Breastfeeding?

PROTECTS & NOURISHES BABIES FROM DAY ONE. Colostrum, a mother's first breast milk, is made during pregnancy and just after birth. This milk (known as "liquid gold,") is rich in nutrients and antibodies: the material for a strong immune system. Soon thereafter, the mother's milk begins to change--by the third to fifth day after birth, it increases in volume and changes in composition of essential nutrients (including fat, sugar, water, protein, vitamins and minerals), antibodies, and hundreds of other substances that enhance brain development, healthy infant growth, and development of the baby's immune system. Breast milk continues to change throughout the course of breastfeeding. It even changes throughout the day and throughout an individual feeding to give babies exactly what they need when they need it most.



FIGHTS DISEASES AND INFECTIONS. Breastfeeding reduces a baby's risk of ear, skin, gastrointestinal, and respiratory infections and sudden infant death syndrome. In the longer term, breastfed babies have reduced risk of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia. Breastfeeding also helps baby form healthy facial muscles and structure, which can help prevent the need for speech therapy or orthodontia when they get older.

Studies have found that women who breastfeed have a lower risk of getting breast, endometrial and ovarian cancers, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

SAVES MONEY. Formula and feeding supplies alone can cost a family well over \$2,000 each year, depending on type of formula purchased. Better infant health also means fewer trips to the doctor, less time off from work to care for sick children, and more time having fun and playing.

PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT. There is less waste compared to that produced by formula cans and bottle supplies. Although breastfeeding requires mothers to consume a small amount of additional calories, it generally requires no containers, no paper, no fuel to prepare, and no transportation to deliver.

SUPPORTS STRONG FAMILY BONDS. Physical contact is essential to newborns. It can help them feel more secure, warm, and comforted. Both mothers and fathers can benefit from this closeness. Breastfeeding requires a mother to take some quiet, relaxed time to bond. Breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact can boost a parent's oxytocin levels. Oxytocin is a hormone that helps milk flow and lowers stress levels to calm both the mother and baby.

How can we support a new breastfeeding family?

Approximately 60% of mothers stop breastfeeding earlier than they planned. There are many factors that go into a mother's decision to stop breastfeeding her baby, including:

- ♥ Unsupportive hospital practices and policies
- ♥ Fatigue and stress of managing around the clock feedings
- ♥ Lack of support from family or friends
- ♥ Lack of knowledgeable health care providers
- ♥ Worry about baby getting enough milk
- ♥ Unsupportive workplace or child care
- ♥ Embarrassment feeding in public

Community support matters! Mothers who receive support during their pregnancy and after giving birth are more likely to breastfeed, and to continue breastfeeding for longer periods of time. Having support from friends, family, childcare providers, local businesses, and employers can make all the difference to a breastfeeding family. Whether dropping off a meal, supporting her choice to feed her baby in a public space, or providing adequate breaks and space to pump during work time, a little bit of support goes a long way towards helping families to meet their breastfeeding goals.

MAKE SURE IT'S A GOOD TIME. Check in before you arrive to make sure it's a good time for visitors. It's good for new moms and dads to practice lots of skin-to-skin with baby, and some may want to make this a private time. Moms and dads also need to sleep when the baby does, day or night, so you may need to set your visit for another time.

ASSIST MOM. Ask if you can bring the baby to mom once she gets set up in her favorite breastfeeding position or chair. Bring mom a glass of water and some snacks when she is breastfeeding. Many moms feel very thirsty as they nurse.

HELP WITH DAILY CHORES. Offer to help out by bringing a meal, doing household chores, running errands, or caring for other children in the home.

OFFER TO CARE FOR THE BABY AFTER BREASTFEEDING. Offer to hold the baby for 20 to 30 minutes after breastfeeding, until baby falls into a deep sleep and can be placed gently back into her crib for a nap. This gives mom a chance to rest, knowing that the baby is being cared for.

BE ENCOURAGING. Encourage mom to stick with her goals, and help her find helpful breastfeeding information and professional support (lactation consultant) if she needs help.

God is Right Here:

Worship is coming together as a community of God to claim the presence of Christ. So we listen to the readings, we break the bread, we share the cup, we sing songs. They are all gestures in which we remind each other that no matter what we are experiencing – whether it is joy or pain or suffering – God is there. The world around us is trying to pull us away from that. It wants to say that nothing is happening here so why don't you buy this or go here or find your happiness there? The worshipping community is saying God is right here with us.... The worship life of the church over the year is bringing Christ back into the center of our lives and realizing that we as a body of people are representing the living Christ in our world.



Reflection Question: How does your participation in a worshipping community bring Christ back into the center of your life?

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another...” Hebrews 10: 24, 25

Author: Henri Nouwen, from *The Road to Peace*



The parish nurse ministry serves the community, regardless of any church affiliation. Feel free to call or email to: schedule a confidential appointment to discuss your health/wellness questions, schedule transportation to a medical/dental/counseling appointment if you need a ride, request a prayer shawl or comfort meal gift card for someone in the community going through a difficult time, locate community health resources, request other parish nurse work, discuss health ministry volunteer opportunities, or discuss your ideas for the health ministry! 😊