

The benefits of breastfeeding

Even before your baby makes her grand entrance, you may have noticed changes in your breasts. This is your body preparing to breastfeed. Understanding what these changes mean and how the act of breastfeeding benefits you and your baby's health is the key for many women. Here are some benefits, which may have a special meaning to you when thinking about breastfeeding.

Breastmilk has everything your little one needs to grow and offers benefits for you, too. **Benefits for baby** Breast milk is nature's perfect food for your baby. Here's why: Breast milk evolves as your baby's nutritional needs change. For the first 3 to 4 days, your breasts produce a thick, yellow milk called colostrum, or first milk. It's concentrated with antibodies and proteins to protect your baby's newborn intestines to provide natural protective factors. Breast milk naturally has the perfect proportions of proteins, carbohydrates and fats to meet your baby's energy needs. The fat in breast milk is rich in essential fatty acids, such as DHA, which helps support normal brain and eye development. It's easily digested and absorbed. The abundance of nutrients in breast milk foster the healthiest environment for your baby's digestive system. The proteins in breastmilk are naturally gentle and easy to digest. It offers protection: Breast milk contains antibodies and other components that help reduce the risk of infection such as diarrhea and ear infections. Healthy bacteria (bifidobacteria and lactobacilli) called probiotics in breastmilk contributes to the development of a healthy digestive tract and strong immune system. Learn more about the role of probiotics in baby's immunity now.

Benefits for mom Breastfeeding is good for mom's health, too. Here's why: Lessens future health risks Breastfeeding has been associated with decreased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, breast cancer and ovarian cancer later on in life. Breastfeeding hormones like oxytocin can help improve your recovery time. The act of breastfeeding triggers the release of oxytocin, which helps the uterus to contract and return to its pre-pregnancy size in less time. Promotes reduced stress and has a calming effect. Hormones stimulated by the physical contact with your baby and production of breast milk help you relax and feel calmer. Helps you bond and read your baby's cues. Escape the hustle and bustle together. Relax with your baby and observe how she communicates. Skin-to-skin and eye-to-eye contact provides a unique closeness. Inexpensive, convenient and naturally made. Requires little to no equipment. Can be done almost anywhere and anytime. * All breastfeed, full-term infants in Canada should receive a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 µg (400 IU)