

#2: Importance of Exclusive Breastfeeding Prenatal Education



Breast milk is all your baby needs for the first six months of life

- Babies need no other food or fluid, including water.
- Introducing other food or fluids can cause problems for breastfeeding and your baby's health.

The early months of your baby's life are essential to long-term development

- Breastfeeding gives your baby the body-building components that are particularly suited to his or her health and development.
- Milk from animal and plant sources do not contain the body-building components particularly suited to the human body.

The first milk is colostrum

- Colostrum is in your breasts starting about the fifth month of pregnancy.
- Colostrum is available in small amounts which perfectly match your baby's stomach size at birth.
- Breast milk begins to be produced when your baby is born, and increases in amount daily, as your baby's stomach size grows.
- Small amounts of colostrum in the first few days keep your baby from overfilling his or her stomach. This is important while your baby is learning to coordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing.
- Colostrum gives your baby protection against disease that no formula can give.

Babies are born with extra fluid stores

- This extra fluid is used over the first few days while your baby's stomach is too small to accommodate much fluid.
- The weight loss your baby will normally experience in the first few days is simply the loss of "water weight."

Breast milk is the only food your baby needs for the first six months of life

Breast milk has all the nutrition and fluid your baby needs for the first six months, even in hot weather. Breast milk is better for your baby than any other food or fluid. Giving other foods or fluids may decrease your baby's desire for your breast milk.

Giving your baby only breast milk for the first six months is best for your baby's health

- Your baby's body has iron stored from your body during pregnancy. Your breast milk has a protein that makes your baby's body able to use that iron.
- Babies who have only breast milk for six months get sick less often than babies who eat other foods. They have less pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. They also have less intestinal disease, fewer ear infections and fewer allergies.

Babies are not ready to take other foods until 6 months of age

- For the first six months of life, your baby's intestine has small pores in it like a net. If given other foods, nonhuman proteins can go through the pores into your baby's body and cause allergies. Around 6 months of age, the pores in your baby's intestine close up. Your baby can then eat other foods.
- Around 6 months of age, your baby is able to sit up. A baby must be able to sit up to swallow food properly.

- Around 6 months of age, your baby's tongue can move in to accept food, unlike during breastfeeding when the tongue pushes out.
- By 6 months of age, the baby's mouth cavity has deepened. Your baby can then eat spoonfuls of food.

Breast milk should still be baby's main source of nutrition for your baby's first year

- Breast milk is better than any other food for nutrition and disease protection. It is important to introduce solids after six months so your baby will learn to eat different foods.
- It's important to continue breastfeeding. Breastfeed prior to each meal of solids, as the "first course."
- You can also keep up your baby's breast milk intake by gradually increasing meals as they age. Try one meal of solids a day at 6 months old, then two solid feedings a day at 7 months old, three meals a day at 8 months old, then three meals plus snacks at 9 months old. Breastfeed before each meal, and before and after sleep periods.

- Important fats found only in breast milk build the brain, eyes and digestive system. The brain and nervous system grow a lot over the first year or two. The amount of fat in your milk grows over this time. Breastfeeding through the second year helps your baby develop a better brain, eyesight, and develop a digestive system that more efficiently absorbs nutrients.

Breastfeeding may continue longer than your infant's first year of life

- Breastfeeding offers comfort and emotional support. As your baby develops the ability to talk and walk, he or she may also get separation anxiety. Breastfeeding helps your baby to feel secure.
- As your baby comes into contact with other children, the disease-fighting components of breast milk help him or her stay healthy.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continuing to breastfeed as long as you both desire, even into the third year of life or longer. The longer you breastfeed, the greater the benefits, for you and your baby.
- You can breastfeed during pregnancy, as well as nurse an older child along with an infant. This is called tandem nursing.

**Breastfeeding is the gift of a lifetime—
A gift that only a mother can give.**