

# Research on breastfeeding and its effects

Psychology, Child Development



“ Breastfeeding is the process of feeding a mother’s breast milk to her infant, either directly from the breast or by expressing (pumping out) the milk from the breast and bottle-feeding it to the infant”. (NICHD. gov). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusively breastfeeding a baby for the first six months of life, and then up to a year if possible. It is also important to note that it is great if the mother is able to breastfeed longer than the first year if it works for both mom and baby. Breastfeeding provides what many refer to as a “ perfect balance” of nutrition. Many changes take place in the early stages of pregnancy that prepare the breasts for lactation. Hormones like estrogen, progesterone, prolactin, and other hormones help promote blood flow to the breasts. The mother’s breast size increases, as does the areola, and nipple pigmentation. Colostrum is a sort of precursor to breast milk. This is sticky, yellow fluid that contains necessary nutrients that help aid the baby to live outside of the uterus. Colostrum offers many benefits for the baby such as: containing antibodies and white blood cells which will aid the baby in building a strong immune system. Colostrum also creates a strong coating for the baby’s stomach/intestines to help steer germs and other bacteria that could possibly cause illness and therefore, making it the perfect food for a newborn. Breast milk contains antibodies that help the baby not only fight off viruses and bacteria but also protects against allergies and eczema. Proteins in cow’s milk and soy milk formulas can activate, or initiate an allergic reaction. Breast milk also causes less stomach upset, diarrhea, and constipation compared to formula, because breastmilk is so easy for a baby to digest. Breast-fed babies also have a better antibody response to vaccines than formula-fed babies. Human milk contains a

plethora of distinct bioactive molecules that help protect against infections and other dangerous diseases that contribute to the maturation of the immune system. Human milk is tailored to suit the human infant, in its nutritional form in order to promote a baby's healthy development. Breast milk is easily digested by the baby and contains all of the nutrients that an infant needs in the first six months of life: fat, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water. Needless to say, breastfeeding is indeed ideal, however, it may come with some difficulties. Many women may find breastfeeding come naturally or easy to them, but it is not uncommon for some moms to stumble upon challenges while breastfeeding. Although there are many of these challenges, some of the more common challenges women face may include sore nipples, low milk supply, plugged ducts, and sometimes even a nursing strike.

Although breastfeeding should be comfortable, some moms may have trouble breastfeeding their newborns because of the tenderness of their nipples. However, one of the main solutions to this problem is to play around with the baby's latch and positioning. Soreness and discomfort may begin because of the way the baby is positioned during feeding. Therefore, a solution may be for moms to seek guidance from lactation consultants. Additionally, with the advancement of technology today, moms can search up different tips and tricks online ranging from specialists, all the way to other moms for breastfeeding techniques.

Low milk supply is also a common problem for moms and breastfeeding. However, it is important to remember that it is possible for a mom's milk supply to feel low, even though it is actually normal. It is normal for a mom's

breasts to no longer feel full, and the baby can be anywhere around the age of six weeks to two months old. This is a period where a baby may only nurse for about five minutes at a time, and it is completely normal. Something to take into consideration if this is a problem is to avoid giving the baby any kind of formula in place of breast milk, because it is possible that the baby may lose interest in the breast milk and thus, actually decreasing a mother's milk supply.

Moms may also experience plugged ducts with breastfeeding. Plugged ducts occur when a milk duct does not drain properly, because pressure builds up behind the plug, causing the surrounding tissue to become inflamed. This may feel like a tender, and sore lump in the breast (not including fever or other symptoms). A couple of solutions to this problem can be to breast-feed on the side that has the plugged duct as often as you can because it will help loosen the plug and promote even distribution of the milk. It is also helpful to massage the area, moving your fingers in a circular motion, and massaging toward the nipple. However, it is important to note that if one continuously gets plugged ducts, it is important to seek help from a lactation consultant. One last challenge that moms may face with breastfeeding is a nursing strike. This is a time where a baby may refuse the breast altogether.

Although it is uncommon for a baby to wean themselves off a breast, some moms find themselves facing what is referred to as a "nursing strike". This is a time where a baby doesn't want to breastfeed. Something causing a nursing strike may be that the baby isn't feeling well, and that may be from a cold, stuffy nose, or even an upset stomach. Another reason may be because the baby may be upset because of a change in the nursing routine,

or because the mother was apart from the baby for a long period of time. However, some solutions to this problem may be to keep putting the baby to the breast, especially when showing hunger signs. It also helps to give the baby extra love by cuddling. It is important to hold the baby close and remember the importance of that skin-to-skin contact.

Despite the challenges that come with breastfeeding, it is still considered the best choice for feeding the baby. Why? Breast-feeding is the foundation for a bond between mother and baby. This intimate time of skin-to-skin contact is necessary for a bond to form between mother and child. Newborn babies cannot see very far. In fact, babies can only see about 8-14 inches away. Therefore, when a mother is breastfeeding her child, that space between the mother's breast and the mother's face is all within the baby's focus. The baby is able to see his or her mother's face, making this bonding time is very crucial for the relationship.

Another reason why some consider breastfeeding the best option for a baby is that it could help prevent obesity. Obesity is a serious health problem faced by many children in childhood, and later on in adulthood. Breastfed infants are less likely to be obese later in life because mothers are less likely to overfeed their babies. Breastfeeding also helps the baby develop healthy eating patterns. Breastfed babies tend to regulate their food intake and therefore, are at a lower risk for obesity. Another positive of breastmilk is that it can adapt to your baby's needs, making this only one of the many useful benefits of breast-feeding.

A mother's body reacts a certain way with the baby's saliva and creates the necessary antibodies in order to appropriately protect the baby's immune system. Breast-fed babies have lower risks of asthma, leukemia, ear infections, eczema, SIDS, and even Type 2 Diabetes. (womenshealth. gov) Lastly, breastfeeding saves parents a lot of money because formula can be very expensive. Raising a baby all together is very expensive, but raising a baby on the formula is even more costly. Kelly Bonyata, certified breastfeeding specialist, estimates that babies consume an average of 25 ounces of milk per day during their first year of life. The more inexpensive brands of baby formula can cost parents up to \$0. 09 per ounce, while the more expensive brands cost about \$0. 32 per ounce. Therefore, taking an average baby that consumes about 25 ounces of milk per day, one can expect to spend anywhere between \$800-\$2, 000 in the first year alone. Not to mention, the cost for other things such as a stroller, crib, car seat, clothes, diapers, and other baby food. With these things taken into account, it is ultimately cheaper for moms to breastfeed.

However, a big problem that many women, in particular, face with breastfeeding is the sexual stigma with breastfeeding in public. Society has definitely caused parents to be ashamed or embarrassed by their bodies when breast-feeding by turning what should be a natural way of feeding a baby, into something that is inappropriate and sexualized.

The media has been sexualizing the female body for decades. Society has taken what should be something that is natural and morphed it into the complete opposite. Breastfeeding should be between a woman and her child,

however, it has turned into some kind of sport because of the number of observers. A big problem with this is that really women (and breasts) are served to be seen as “pleasing men”. Many arguments have been made where many think it is perfectly fine to post provocative billboards of women in lingerie where some or most of their breasts are exposed. However, when a woman is showing Part of her breast while breastfeeding their baby in public, it is no longer acceptable. Instead, this act is seen as inappropriate and shameful. This is why many women face protests from people when breastfeeding in public.

In fact, it wasn't until last year, 2018, when breastfeeding in public became legal in all 50 states. Utah and Idaho did not have laws that protected nursing mothers while breastfeeding in public. This was a huge problem because if a state did not offer any form of legal protection against those hindering the right to nurse in public, then any rights the nursing mother has are instantly limited. For example, let's say there's a family in a restaurant. This family has an infant with them and suddenly, the baby starts to cry. The mother realizes the baby is hungry and begins to nurse. The owners come around and ask that the mother cover-up during her feeding the baby. If she refuses to do so, the restaurant owners could easily say that she is trespassing, and could have the mother and their family removed from the restaurant. Therefore, the property rights owners override the breastfeeding right.

This may be a contributing factor as to why formula companies have become more, and more popular. Utilizing formula has given moms, specifically, the

courage, and confidence to feed their babies because they don't need to cover up. Parents choose formula because it shields that public discomfort that parents feel about breast-feeding, despite the lack of nutrients. For example, the formula may be more difficult for babies to digest because it is made from cow's milk, and therefore takes a longer period for the baby to adjust to this form of milk as opposed to breastmilk which is something natural and is "human-produced". Fortunately now, many laws have been implemented to protect breastfeeding mothers. Six states (California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Vermont,) and Puerto Rico have implemented or encouraged the development of a breastfeeding awareness education campaign. Seventeen states (California, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia) and Puerto Rico exempt breastfeeding mothers from jury duty or allow jury service to be postponed. Lastly, all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have laws that specifically allow women to breastfeed in any public or private location.

I think it's important that not only parents but society as a whole becomes more educated on the knowledge of breast-feeding. This way, new social norms can be made, and breast-feeding is seen as normal. Lactation rooms are private spaces where nursing mothers can "express" breast milk for their babies. In some companies, moms can use their private offices as lactating rooms. are a new thing. Altogether, these are huge steps in the right direction in regards to breastfeeding; normalizing breastfeeding, and ending the sexual stigma attached to it.



In conclusion, breastfeeding positively contributes to a healthy, developing baby, and it also positively benefits the nursing mother's health. Some benefits that breastfeeding provides for the nursing mother is that breastfeeding leads to a decrease in postpartum bleeding. (aap. org) Up to 5% of women who give birth may experience heavy bleeding. this heavy bleeding is called postpartum hemorrhage and it is most likely to occur between the first 24 hours after delivery. However, this bleeding can happen anytime within the first 12 weeks after the baby is born. Postpartum hemorrhage can cause a big decrease in a mom's blood pressure. When the pressure gets too low, the organs don't get enough blood which leads to shock. Breastfeeding helps to decrease the possibility of experiencing postpartum bleeding. Breastfeeding also leads to a decrease in menstrual blood loss and increased child spacing (lactational amenorrhea). Some other benefits for the mom include an earlier return to prepregnancy weight and a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers.

## **Bibliography**

1. Ballard, Olivia, and Ardythe L Morrow. " Human Milk Composition: Nutrients and Bioactive Factors". Pediatric Clinics of North America, U. S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2013". Benefits of Breastfeeding". AAP. org.
2. " Breastfeeding and Breast Milk". Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.
3. " Breastfeeding: Breast When United". SUWANNEE RIVER AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER, 13 Aug. 2018.

4. Johnson, Tahra, et al. Breastfeeding State Laws. Lewis, Katherine. “ Why Employers Should Provide a Lactation Room for Nursing Employees”. The Balance Careers, The Balance Careers, 29 Apr. 2019.
5. Lucia, Carole Anderson, and Carole Anderson Lucia. “ The Benefits of Breastfeeding”. Parents”. Making the Decision to Breastfeed”. Womenshealth. gov, 14 Mar. 2019.
6. “ Mother’s Milk: NYC Braces for New Workplace Lactation Room Requirements”. Labor & Employment Law Blog, 18 Dec. 2018.
7. Simon, Javier. “ The Cost of Baby Formula”. SmartAsset, SmartAsset, 7 May 2019.
8. “ The Physiological Basis of Breastfeeding”. Infant and Young Child Feeding: Model Chapter for Textbooks for Medical Students and Allied Health Professionals., U. S. National Library of Medicine, 1 Jan. 1970.
9. “ Why Baby May Suddenly Refuse the Breast”. Why Baby May Suddenly Refuse the Breast | WIC Breastfeeding.