

# Breast feeding vs. formula feeding



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Breast feeding Vrs Formula Feeding Introduction Breast milk is the optimum feed for the baby and has several advantages both for the mother and the baby (AAP, 2010). Infact, research has shown that human breast milk is the best food for newborn babies. However, in certain situations and due to some circumstances, babies are frequently given formula feeds, drawing the attention of the health professionals to consider about the benefits and disadvantages of the formula feeds when compared to breast feeds. In this article, the benefits and disadvantages of breast feeds and formula feeds will be highlighted through review of suitable literature. Breast feeds Breast milk has the right composition of various nutrients essential for the survival, growth and development of the baby (CDC, 2011). It is easily available, non-expensive, warm, and stable. For the baby, breast feeding has several advantages. It enhances the immunity of the baby because of transfer of maternal antibodies, thus preventing several infectious diseases. It also protects the baby from other conditions like allergies, atopy, asthma and some autoimmune related diseases. Other than antibodies, breast milk has many antiinfective factors (AAP, 2010). Breast fed babies are at decreased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and are likely to be more intelligent than those on exclusive formula feeding. They are also less likely to develop necrotizing enterocolitis in the newborn period and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and childhood obesity later in life. Mothers too have several benefits. Exclusive breast feeding causes lactational amenorrhoea, a natural means of postpartum birth control. It helps the mother shed the extra weight gained during pregnancy. It increases bonding with the baby and also enhance familial bonds. Breast feeding causes release of certain hormones which relax the mother. In the long term, for the mother, breast feeding

decreases the risk of development of some cancers like the ovarian cancer, breast cancer and endometrial cancer (WHO, 2003). It also decreases the risk of development of coronary artery disease, metabolic syndrome and diabetes in the mother. The AAP recommends exclusive breast feeding upto 6 months of age. One disadvantage with breast feed is that it cannot be given if the mother has HIV or tuberculosis infection (AAP, 2010). Other disadvantages include risk of malnutrition manifesting as iron deficiency and vitamin deficiencies. As far as infant formula is concerned, its composition is similar to mother's milk, but without antibodies and anti-infective properties. It is associated with some health risks like otitis media, frequent gastroenteritis, allergies, sudden infant death syndrome, autism, necrotising enterocolitis and diabetes in future. It is also associated with lower cognitive development (Fomon, 2001). Infant formula feeding has some advantages in that it can be given even in maternal HIV and tuberculosis. It is fortified with iron and vitamins, thus decreasing the risk of malnutrition. Formula feed can be administered in the absence of the mother. It is digested slowly and hence prevents the baby from becoming hungry frequently. Babies get their nutrition through the milk supplied to them, either breast milk or infant formula. The milk has carbohydrates which provides energy to the baby. It has fat which also provides energy to the baby. Proteins are essential for the growth of the baby. Milk also has other nutrients like mineral and brain growth factors essential for growth and development of the body and brain of the baby. For my child, I would prefer breast feeding because of the several advantages associated with it for both the mother and baby. It is free, easily available, requires no preparation or administering apparatus like bottle. Above all it enhancing mother-child bonding. References AAP. (2010).

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