

The benefits of breastfeeding



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Human milk is uniquely engineered for human infants, and is the biologically or natural way to feed infants. Breastfeeding, in comparison to feeding breast milk substitutes such as infant formula, has numerous health benefits. It not only has benefits on children and mothers but the society and economy as well.

Introduction

One of the most useful and natural steps a mother can take for her children is to breastfeed them. Science has proven remarkable health benefits of breast milk that are passed from mothers to their children. The benefits, from the building of antibodies to protect a newborn at birth to the special nutrients to prevent numerous infancy infections, are countless. No other sole step taken by a mother can so drastically impact the present and future wellbeing of her newborn. Breast milk not only benefits the newborn baby, it also benefits the mother, the society and the environment. In this paper the benefits of breastfeeding for both infants as well as mothers will be stated.

Also, I will talk about its benefits to the environment and society. Finally, I will discuss what the United Arab Emirates does in terms of breastfeeding.

The benefits of breastfeeding for Infants

Nutritional benefits

Breast milk is a unique nutritional source that cannot adequately be replaced by any other food. It is ultimately the best source of nutrition for a new baby. Many components in breast milk help protect infants against infection and disease. It contains the perfect combination of proteins, fats, vitamins, and carbohydrates. The proteins in breast milk are more easily digested than in formula or cow's milk. The calcium and iron in breast milk are also more easily absorbed. Also, in it are Leukocytes which are living cells that are only found in breast milk. They help fight infection. It is the antibodies, living cells, enzymes, and hormones that make breast milk the perfect choice (Brown, 2008).

Immunological benefits

Most preemies are at risk for infections that can sometimes be very serious, so immune system benefits are some of the most important benefits of breastfeeding a premature baby can have. Human milk has the ability to protect them against infections and serious diseases. It protects the infants against serious Infections like Diarrhea and Haemophilus Influenza. Children who are on breast feed experience a lower rate of severe diarrheal disease than children that are given formula milk. In a study conducted on a controlled group of infants (age bracket of less than 6 months), it was

observed that newborns on breast feed were noticeably protected against haemophilus influenza, type B disease (Cochi, 1986).

Evidence suggests that breast milk can carry particular or non-particular immunities to the newborn's respiratory tract which is extremely important in the early days after birth when their immune system is not fully developed. Mother's milk protects the newborn babies against respiratory problems like, breathlessness, wheezing and other infections related to the respiratory tract in the initial four months of their life. Children who are given formula milk experience increased risk for, respiratory problems, severe otitis media along with extended duration of middle ear infections due to immature immune system. Breast milk as well plays a vital role in protecting the infants from the infection of Herpes Simplex virus II. It was also confirmed that breastfeeding babies were less likely to die from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), the reason being the prevention of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections due to strong immunity developed in them because of breast milk (Allen & Hector, 2005).

To sum up, all these findings of different studies strongly indicate that mother's milk develops and enhances the immune system of the newborn babies especially in the very initial years of their life.

Cognitive benefits

In addition to the nutritional and immunological benefits of breast milk, breastfeeding may help preemies get ahead intellectually. Breast milk is associated with increases in child cognitive ability and educational achievements. Cognitive development of social and psychomotor skills gains

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increases with the consumption and duration of breastfeeding. According to Horwood and Fergusson such effects are relatively long lived extending not only throughout childhood but also into young adulthood (1998). Children who consume human milk in early days of their life have a significant higher level of IQ at the age bracket of seven and eight than those kids who did not get their mother's milk (Erterm, 2001). In fact, studies suggest that nutrients present in breast milk may have a significant effect on neurologic development in premature and term infants. “ Breastfeeding is associated with a 3.16-point higher score for cognitive development compared with formula feeding after adjustment for significant covariates” (Anderson et al, 1999)*.

Health Benefits to Moms Who Breastfeed

The babies are not the only ones who benefit from breastfeeding. Moms also benefit from breastfeeding their premature babies. Breastfeeding not only reduces the risk of breast cancer but also plays a role in preventing endometrial, ovarian and cervical cancers. It reduces the risk of anemia and Protects against health issue related to bones like osteoporosis and hip fractures later in life (Heacock, 1992). It also greatly helps the body of the pregnant women to return to its earlier shape faster, helps in losing the extra weight during pregnancy and also plays a very important role in the contraction of the uterus after delivery to control postpartum bleeding. The fat stores of the body are consumed to produce human milk which can easily burn from five hundred to fifteen hundred calories every day. Breastfeeding the babies also delay the return of fertility and thus provide a natural gap between subsequent pregnancies. It also develops a special bonding and

emotional relationship between the mother and the baby (Brown, 2008 & Dimes Foundation, 2010).

Benefits to the environment and the Society

Breastfeeding also has economic advantages; it's cheaper than buying formula and helps avoid medical bills later because it helps equip the baby to fight off disease and infection. According to the Unicef financial benefits is associated with breastfeeding. Higher breastfeeding initiation and duration rates would significantly improve the health of a nation. “ Breastfeeding babies and their mothers are at lower risk of certain illnesses. There are therefore potential cost savings for the wider health care system” (2006). In fact, it reduces both direct costs such as clinical or hospital fees and indirect costs such as formula costs (Weimer, 2001). Thus, breastfeeding is also linked to the environment. Breastfeeding the young ones decreases the use of raw material, energy and other resources required in the manufacturing, packing, distributing, promoting and disposing of waste materials of formula milk which ultimately reduces global pollution (Lance, 2007).

Breastfeeding in United Arab Emirates

Conclusion

It is concluded that not a single brand of formula milk can replace the properties and nutrients of breast milk, regardless of the addition of vitamins, supplements and minerals; it is and will essentially stay a chemical formulation. Human milk has nutritional, immunological, and developmental benefits for the child, as well as physiological and emotional benefits for the mother. It also holds several benefits for the environment and society. The United Arab Emirates