

## Why Is Breastfeeding So Important?



Humans have been breastfeeding for at least 400,000 years because breastmilk is the optimal food for growing babies. It is important for you as a father to know the benefits for your baby and for the whole family as you influence the first of many decisions in your child's life. You will become a teacher, a coach, a supporter, and a role model.

Breastfeeding is not only about mom and baby. **Among the greatest factors that determine whether or not a mother will**

**breastfeed is the support of the baby's father.** Research has shown that when fathers were completely supportive, mothers working outside the home breastfed 98.1 percent of the time, but when fathers were indifferent, mothers only breastfed 26.9 percent of the time. If you want your family to have all the benefits of breastfeeding, it is crucial that you strongly encourage your baby's mother to breastfeed.

**"You new dads shouldn't feel left out when it comes to baby's mealtime. Breastfeeding is one of the healthiest things that can be done for your newborn."**

Dean Edell, MD, host of the Dr. Dean Edell Show

## Fathering without Feeding

**"Every baby needs a non-nutritive parent. That's the father."**

Ruth A. Lawrence, MD, Author, *Breastfeeding: A Guide for the Medical Profession*

Dads might feel excluded from mom and baby's breastfeeding relationship during the first few months, but it is important to keep in mind that a father is the first person to show his baby that feeding does

not equal love. Humans are born more helpless than any other animal, and they need to spend more time as children learning from their environment. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in a child's development from early infancy.

Fathers encourage their children to use new words, to engage in games, and to use their arms and legs in play. They can bathe them, cosleep with them at night, wear them on outings, feed their baby mom's pumped breastmilk when mom is away, and just hang out together. While breastfeeding does create a strong tie between mother and baby, there is no shortage of rewarding work for dads. Breastfeeding is only temporary, but the benefits are long-lasting, and in no time at all, your child will be exploring the world outside his mother's arms.



## What the Doctors Recommend

**“A millionaire’s baby fed with commercial baby milk has a poorer diet than the poorest family’s baby who is breastfed.”**

– World Health Organization, 1997



**T**he American Academy of Pediatrics (80,000 physicians who work with babies and children) advises that babies should be fed breastmilk exclusively for the first six months of life. During this time, no water, juice or foods should be given.

After six months, breastfeeding should continue in addition to complementary foods for at least a year. Mom should continue breastfeeding until she and her baby decide they are ready to wean. All the experts agree that breastmilk is good for baby, not just as food, but as a powerful protection against ailments such as allergies and ear infections, and can even reduce the chances of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) as well as a number of other diseases.



## Why You Want Your Baby Breastfed

**Babies that are fed breastmilk are happier and healthier than formula-fed babies. Why?**

### ***Breastfeeding:***

- Gives antibodies from mom to baby to boost baby’s immune system;
- Helps bond mother and child;
- Provides food that is easily digestible for baby;
- Confers passive immunity;
- Helps protect against measles, chicken pox, and other contagious diseases;
- Promotes normal growth and neurological development;
- Prevents hypothermia in the newborn;
- Provides partial protection against necrotizing enterocolitis, a gastrointestinal disease that often affects premature infants;
- Provides significant protection against bacteremia, meningitis, and neonatal sepsis;
- Promotes proper tooth, jaw, and visual development;
- Adapts to meet the needs of premature and low birth weight babies;
- Helps develop a baby’s cognitive ability.