



7 Ways Breastfeeding Benefits Mothers

What's good for baby is also good for mother. When mothers follow nature's lead and breastfeed their babies, their own bodies benefit - & so do their budgets!

1. **Reduces the risk of breast cancer.** Women who breastfeed reduce their risk of developing breast cancer by as much as 25 percent. The reduction in cancer risk comes in proportion to the cumulative lifetime duration of breastfeeding. That is, the more months or years a mother breastfeeds, the lower her risk of breast cancer.
2. **Reduces the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer.** One of the reasons for cancer-fighting effects of breastfeeding is that estrogen levels are lower during lactation. It is thought that the less estrogen available to stimulate the lining of the uterus and perhaps breast tissue, the less the risk of these tissues becoming cancerous.
3. **Lessons osteoporosis.** Non-breastfeeding women have a four times greater chance of developing osteoporosis than breastfeeding women and are more likely to suffer from hip fractures in their post-menopausal years.
4. **Benefits of child spacing.** Since breastfeeding delays ovulation, the longer a mother breastfeeds the more she is able to practice natural child spacing, if she desires. How long a woman remains infertile depends on her baby's nursing pattern and her own individual baby.
5. **Promotes emotional health.** Not only is breastfeeding good for mother's body, it is good for her mind. Studies show that breastfeeding mothers show less postpartum anxiety and depression than do formula-feeding moms.
6. **Promotes postpartum weight loss.** Breastfeeding mothers showed significantly larger reduction in hip circumference and more fat loss by one month post partum when compared with formula-feeding moms. Breastfeeding mothers tend to have an earlier return to their pre-pregnant weight.
7. **Costs less to breastfeed.** Breastfeeding can save \$1100 - \$3900 per year depending on the brand of formula. Even taking into consideration the slight increase in food costs to a breastfeeding mother, the American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that a breastfeeding mother will save around \$400 during the first year of breastfeeding.

7 Ways Breastfed Babies Become Healthier Adults

The health benefits of breastfeeding extend far past weaning. As researchers look at the various factors associated with different diseases, they often find that children and adults who are breastfed as infants are less likely to experience problems with chronic diseases. In some cases, even minimal amounts of breastfeeding may provide some protection against disease in later life, but usually the longer a baby is breastfed the greater the protective effect. Here are some of the ways that breastfeeding builds a lifetime of good health.

1. **Breastfeeding prevents obesity.** Even in infancy, breastfed babies as a group are leaner than their formula-fed peers. Studies have shown that children who are breastfed are less likely to be obese during adolescence, and that longer periods of breastfeeding greatly reduce the risk of being overweight in adulthood. Overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults. Since breastfed babies themselves control how much they eat (aided by the changes in fat levels during a feeding session), children who are breastfed learn to trust their bodies' signals about how much they need to eat and when. This builds healthy eating habits right from the start. Although parents might urge a formula-fed baby to finish up the last ounce or two of milk in the bottle, you can't do this to a breastfed baby.
2. **Better Teeth.** Breastfed babies have better jaw alignment and are less likely to need orthodontic work as they get older. A study of 10,000 children found that those who were breastfed for a year or more were 40% less likely to require orthodontic treatment. The sucking action used to breastfeed involves complex motions of facial muscles and tongue. This improves the development of facial muscles and the shape of the palate. The better jaw alignment associated with breastfeeding can even mean less snoring and a lowered risk for a condition known as obstructive sleep apnea – the blockage of air flow during sleep, which can be disturb sleep patterns and lead to other health problems.
3. **Lowered risk of heart disease.** All the evidence isn't in yet, but some researchers believe that breastfeeding during infancy may lower the risk of heart attacks and strokes later in life. This is due in part to the higher levels of cholesterol in human milk. Some heart researchers theorize that because of the cholesterol content of human milk, a breastfed baby's liver learns to metabolize cholesterol better than formula-fed infants. This leads to lower blood cholesterol levels as adults and thus a lower risk of heart disease. Though limited in number, some studies have shown that adults who were formula-fed as infants tend to have higher blood cholesterol and are more likely to have arterosclerotic plaques than those who were breastfed.
4. **Lowered risk of juvenile diabetes.** Babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop type 1 diabetes mellitus in childhood. Researchers have attributed this lowered risk of diabetes to the delayed introduction of cow milk in breastfed babies. In addition, researchers have shown a lower insulin release in breastfed infants compared to infants fed formula. This preventive effect is particularly important if you have a family history of diabetes.
5. **Lowered risk of multiple sclerosis.** Multiple sclerosis, a degenerative muscle disease that strikes adults, may be caused in part by myelin breakdown. However, multiple sclerosis is less common in countries where breastfeeding rates are high. Human milk's contribution to the myelin formation may help to prevent multiple sclerosis in later life.
6. **Lowered risk of asthma and allergy.** Studies have shown that breastfeeding lowers the chances of a child developing allergies and asthma symptoms. Breast milk's immune components protect babies from allergens in the first months of life. Breastfeeding also delays the introduction of potentially allergenic foods, such as cow milk, and soy protein, into the diet until the baby is older and the immune system is more mature.
7. **Other diseases.** Research suggest that breastfeeding may also play a role in preventing digestive diseases, such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, as well as childhood cancers. This makes sense: nourish an infant's body with the unique food designed for it by nature and that body will function in a healthier way, perhaps for the child's entire life.

Breast milk's influence on health is probably more far-reaching than researchers have even dared to imagine, but studies of factors that affect the development of disease in adults seldom ask their research subjects how they were fed as infants (and many adults would have trouble giving accurate answers to these kinds of questions). New studies of what breast milk contains suggest that this living biological fluid carries substances that are critical to the optimal development of many systems in the body. This early development may very well affect the progress of many diseases throughout life.