

Benefits of Breastfeeding

Exclusive breastfeeding, which means no food or liquid other than breastmilk, is recommended for the first six months of life. Continued breastfeeding is also recommended as solid foods are introduced up to 2 years old, or longer.¹ Breast milk is preferred over formula when breastfeeding is feasible for both the parent and baby. There are numerous benefits some of which are summarized in the table below.

Benefits for Parents ^{1,3}	Benefits for Child ^{1,3}
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bonding with child. ■ Lowers risk of breast and ovarian cancer*. ■ Cost-effective ■ Sustainable and Earth-friendly ■ Lower risk of post-partum depression* ■ Lower risk of bleeding after delivery* ■ Release of “feel good” hormones ■ Less time off from work to care for sick child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bonding with parent ■ Enhanced immunity (antibodies) ■ Lower risk of ear infections ■ Lower risk of asthma ■ Lower risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) ■ Lower risk of skin conditions (e.g. eczema) ■ Lower risk of leukemia ■ Lower risk of diabetes (type 1&2) ■ Higher intelligence scores ■ Develops healthy bacteria in the gut

**Benefits specific to biological birth parents*

Although the benefits of breastfeeding for children and parents are numerous, there are good reasons why some parents cannot breastfeed. For example, certain medications may pass into the breastmilk which are not safe for the child. If you have concerns about medications or health conditions which may impact your ability to breast feed, talk to your Functional Medicine provider for guidance or for a referral to a lactation specialist.

Breastfeeding Resources

- [La Leche League International](#)
- [International Lactation Consultant Association](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Chestfeeding for Transgender and Non-Binary Parents](#)

References

1. World Health Organization. Breastfeeding. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/breastfeeding>. Accessed April 9, 2020.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding: Recommendations and Benefits. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/recommendations-benefits.html>. Updated November 4, 2019. Accessed April 9, 2020
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827>. Published March 1, 2012. Accessed April 9, 2020