

The Benefits of EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Exclusive breastfeeding is defined as feeding a baby only breast milk, either at the breast or expressed breast milk. It also means baby receives no other liquids except vitamins, minerals or medicines.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the **first six months of life**, then continuing to breastfeed with the introduction of solids until the baby is one year old or older. The World Health Organization (WHO) also recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continuing breastfeeding with solid foods until the child is two years old.
- Human milk is specific for the growth and development of a newborn's brain, body and intestinal tract. Much research has been done over the past several years demonstrating both short-term and long-term health benefits for the mother and child. **The more breast milk baby receives, the longer the benefits.**
- Baby formula lacks many protective components that naturally occur in human milk. Breast milk contains more than 200 protective components which kill germs, trap harmful cells, slow the inflammatory process and protect the baby's digestive system. Although formula companies try to make formula more like breast milk, formula can never replace human breast milk.
- Human milk contains growth hormones, immune factors, digestive enzymes, anti-inflammatory factors and living cells to fight infections. It encourages growth of good bacteria (bifidobacteria) and reduces disease-causing bacteria. Formula exposes baby to foreign proteins and changes the

environment of the stomach which may increase risk of allergies and illness.

- When supplementation is medically necessary because of low blood sugar, jaundice, excessive weight loss, decreased urination or bowel movements, low birth weight or prematurity – mother's breast milk is the best choice when available. When breast milk is not available, the benefits of formula outweigh the risks.
- Studies show that mother's milk decreases the chances of several health conditions including asthma, allergies, ear infections, gastrointestinal infections, acute respiratory disease, some childhood cancers and diabetes.
- Breastfeeding for several months also reduces a mother's risk for breast, ovarian and endometrial cancers, osteoporosis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and rheumatoid arthritis. The longer and the more children a mother nurses, the lower her risk for these illnesses.

Please use this medically researched information to make **your informed decision** on whether or not to use formula if it is not medically necessary.

RESOURCES:

Lawrence, R A and Lawrence, R M. *Breastfeeding: A Guide to the Medical Profession*. St. Louis: Mosby , Inc., 2010.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General; 2011.



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For more information on breastfeeding your baby, please call Methodist's lactation consultant at 865-835-2268.