Importance of Breastfeeding

Importance to Baby

- Easier to digest for most babies and is the perfect food
- Changes to meet the baby's growing needs
- Helps prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Makes baby smarter (higher IQ)
- Improves healing
- Lowers risk of obesity
- Lowers risk of some childhood cancers
- Lowers risk of diabetes (type 1 and 2)
- Lowers risk of digestive diseases (celiac, Crohn's, etc.)

Importance to Mom

- Helps with weight loss after baby's birth
- Protects from ovarian and breast cancer
- Protects from osteoporosis
- Lowers risk of heart disease and diabetes
- Lowers risk of rheumatoid arthritis
- Lowers risk of the baby blues after baby's birth
- Gives mom time to relax and quietly bond with baby
- Saves time and money by removing the need for formula and bottles

Babies should breastfeed for 1 to 2 years. Begin offering solid foods around 6 months. *Advised by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization.*

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Risks of Formula Feeding

When mothers do not breastfeed they use infant formulas. It is advised by the World Health Organization that parents are told about the health risks of using formula. This handout has evidence from research that shows the risks of formula feeding to help you make a more informed decision about feeding your baby.

Higher risk of death from diseases

Babies who are formula fed have a higher risk of death due to illnesses such as diarrhea and lung infections.

Higher risk of SIDS

Babies who are fed formula are twice as likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Higher risk of obesity

Children who are formula fed are nearly 40 percent more likely to be obese than children who are breastfed – even after looking at other things that may explain why a person may be overweight.

Higher risk of diabetes

Formula feeding increases the risk of getting diabetes later in life.

Higher risk of childhood cancers

Children who have not been breastfed are more likely to get leukemia and other cancers than children who were given only breastmilk.

Higher risk of heart disease

Breastfeeding may help to reduce the risk of heart disease by keeping cholesterol levels low later in life. It also showed that 13- to 16- year-olds who were formula fed have higher blood pressures than children who had received breastmilk.

Risk of lower intelligence

Children who are breastfed do better on intelligence tests than children who were formula fed.

Higher risk of chronic diseases

Formula feeding is linked to higher risk for Type 1 diabetes and bowel diseases such as celiac disease and inflammatory bowel disease.

Higher risk of ear infections

Infants who are formula fed are 50 percent more likely to have ear infections than babies who receive only breastmilk.

Higher risk of allergy

Formula feeding is linked to higher rates of eczema, allergies to food, inherited allergies and allergies which affect breathing such as hay fever.

Higher risk of asthma

Babies who are fed formula are 40 to 50 percent more likely to have asthma or wheezing.

Higher risk of lung infections

Children who are formula fed are 17 times more likely to have pneumonia than children who were given only breastmilk as infants.

Higher risk of diarrhea

Babies who are formula fed are twice as likely to have diarrhea than breastfed babies.

Higher risk of infection from unclean formula

Babies have become very sick and some have died because of harmful germs in formula. Some formulas cannot be sterilized.

Higher risk of effects of poisons in the environment

Breastfeeding lowers the harmful effects on a child's health from poisons in the environment.

Adapted from INFACT Canada's Fourteen Risks of Formula Feeding : A Brief Annotated Bibliography by the Breastfeeding Action Group in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

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