

Benefits of Breastfeeding

For baby and mother

At UW Medicine, we encourage mothers to breastfeed their infants.

Breast milk is the best food for babies.

- Breast milk has complete nutrition with just the right kinds and amounts of fat, sugar, and protein.
- Breast milk is easier to digest than formula. It helps babies grow just as they should.
- Breastfed babies do not gain weight they do not need. They are also less likely to be obese later in life.
- Some studies show that breastfed children have greater brain development than children who are not breastfed.



Breast milk has all the nutrition that your new baby needs.

Breast milk helps protect babies from infection and disease.

- Antibodies and other substances in breast milk fight infection and boost the immune system. This helps prevent problems such as diarrhea, ear infections, allergies, and asthma.
- Breastfed babies get sick less often and are less likely to need care in the hospital when they are sick.
- Studies show breastfeeding protects against diabetes, pneumonia, meningitis, Crohn's disease, colitis, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and some childhood cancers.

Breastfeeding is good for mothers, too.

- Making milk uses calories and can help you lose the extra pounds gained during pregnancy. Breastfeeding mothers get back to their pre-pregnancy weight sooner than mothers who feed their babies formula.



UW Medical Center and Valley Medical Center have earned an award called the “Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative” from UNICEF and the World Health Organization. This award is given to hospitals that provide a positive environment for breastfeeding families by following the “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.”

- Breastfeeding decreases early bleeding after the birth and helps your uterus return to its non-pregnant size.
- Breastfeeding increases the space between pregnancies, which is healthier for both mothers and babies.
- Breastfeeding may decrease the risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis after menopause.
- Women who breastfeed have lower rates of breast and ovarian cancer.
- When your baby is hungry, you can feed him right away.
- Breastfeeding is free. There is no formula to buy and prepare and no bottles and nipples to wash.
- You can feel assured that your breastfed baby is getting the warmth and physical contact that is so important for growth and development.
- Many new mothers find that nursing allows them to take some quiet, relaxed time with their baby. And, the hormones that your body creates during breastfeeding help give you and your baby a feeling of calm and well-being.

Breastfeeding has benefits for society.

- Medical costs are lower for fully breastfed babies than for babies who are never breastfed. Breastfed babies get sick less, and have fewer doctor visits and hospital stays.
- Employed breastfeeding mothers miss less work because their children are sick less often.
- Breastfeeding produces little or no trash or plastic waste.

To learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding, please visit: www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/why-breastfeeding-is-important.

Questions?

Your questions are important.

If you have questions about breastfeeding, ask to talk with a lactation consultant.

A Special Note

Although breast is best for most babies, breastfeeding is not recommended when some medical conditions are present. Please talk with your healthcare provider if you have any questions about breastfeeding for you and your baby.