

Giving Baby A Headstart By Breastfeeding

Though it is a natural part of motherhood, breastfeeding is not instinctive. Lactation Consultant Wong Lai Ying from the NUH Women's Centre shares the facts, myths and benefits of breastfeeding.

- **Breast milk is best for babies**

Breast milk contains natural nutrients that are essential for the baby's growth. It protects babies against infections and decreases the risk of obesity, Type II diabetes, allergies and childhood illnesses. Research has shown it enhances brain, cognitive and motor development. A UK Millennium Cohort Study (2006) reported that children who were breastfed exclusively for at least two to four months appeared to have more developed motor-coordination skills and dexterity, compared to those who have never been breastfed.

In addition, the anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-parasitic agents that act as an immunity booster in breast milk help with faster recovery from illnesses.



- **Mothers benefit too**

Breastfeeding reduces a breastfeeding mother's risk for health conditions such as postpartum haemorrhage, breast, ovarian and uterine cancers, osteoporosis and cardiac diseases.

- **Knowledge is key**

Not all mothers have an easy let down of milk when breastfeeding for the first time. Mothers are encouraged to read up on breastfeeding and where they can seek support from before delivery. Typically, most mothers and babies will settle into a routine within two to three weeks after childbirth.

Tips on breastfeeding:

- 1 Place baby on the mother's chest immediately after birth. This helps baby familiarise himself with the mother's breast so he can feed whenever he is ready.
- 2 Room-in with baby day and night to allow breastfeeding on demand and to promote bonding. Frequent feeding helps in establishing milk supply.
- 3 Breastfeed "on cue" according to the baby's demand and as soon as the baby shows signs of being ready to feed.
- 4 Recognise baby's latch. This enables proper expression and good supply of milk, which in turn helps reduce painful nipples or engorgement.
- 5 Practise various breastfeeding positions such as cradle, cross cradle, football hold and side lying to find the preferred position that best suits mother and baby.

MORE ABOUT BREAST MILK

MYTH	FACT
Supply of breast milk is limited.	Breast milk has a natural "auto-refill" production. Demand generates supply.
It is not safe to breastfeed when one is unwell.	It is fine to continue breastfeeding. Breast milk is a "life fluid" and contains a substance that increases the ability of the immune system to fight infection and disease. Ask your doctor for medications that are safe for breastfeeding.
Baby prefers the bottle.	Some babies may find it more difficult to latch. It may be because the flow is not established or the latching position is incorrect. Consult a lactation consultant. Try alternative feeding methods like a cup, spoon or syringe instead of a bottle teat.