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## NEW BENEFITS OF BREAST-FEEDING

No matter how far technology advances, formula cannot replace a mother's breast-milk. Human breast-milk contains at least a hundred ingredients that cannot be replicated in formula. The breast-milk provided by a mother changes continuously to meet the demands of the baby. As women are becoming more educated about the benefits of breast-feeding, new evidence suggests additional advantages of breast-feeding that are beneficial to both the child and mother's physical and mental health.

Most of us have heard that breast-feeding provides many benefits to the baby including protection from illness and infection. Recent studies indicate that breast-feeding your infant for at least one month reduces the risk for some forms of childhood leukemia by 21 percent. Babies who are breast-fed for at least six months are 30 percent less likely to acquire the disease. Other recent evidence suggests that breast-fed children have an average five point higher IQ than formula fed children` as there is strong evidence between breast-feeding and brain development. Breast-fed children also have a reduced risk for the following medical conditions:

- constipation and/or diarrhea
- respiratory infections
- ear infections
- urinary tract infections
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM)
- Crohn's Disease
- Allergies

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Mothers also benefit from breast-feeding. Breast-feeding is a natural cycle of the pregnancy period and is beneficial in helping the uterus regain its original size. It also helps the breast-feeding mother return to her pre pregnancy weight. Research also indicates that breast-feeding may reduce the risk of osteoporosis, ovarian and breast cancer.

What we may not realize is that breast-feeding also benefits society. In terms of expense, breast-feeding is very beneficial to our economy. Since breast-fed children are typically healthier children, working mothers are less likely to be absent from their jobs. Health care costs are also reduced with fewer doctor visits and hospitalizations related to ear infections, respiratory infections and other illnesses. Breast-feeding is very economical for families who do not have to purchase formula. Mothers choosing to breast-feed can save an average of \$1,000.00 per year. Despite the many benefits of breast-milk, not enough babies in this country are being breast-fed. Due to the number of women entering the workforce, many women are forced to stop breast-feeding once they return to work. It is believed that more babies would receive the benefits of breast-milk if more employers allowed time for breast-feeding and provided areas at the workplace for moms to express their milk.

As a society, it is important that we support breast-feeding in public establishments and the workplace to allow our children to receive the most beneficial nutrition for optimal growth and development.

**Sources:** [www.aap.org/policy](http://www.aap.org/policy)  
[www.breastfeedingtaskforce.org](http://www.breastfeedingtaskforce.org)

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