

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a special bonding experience shared between you and your baby. During the first 6 months, you should only feed your baby breast milk. At 6 months of age you can start giving your baby solid foods. You should breastfeed until your baby is at least 2 years old. There are many benefits from breastfeeding:



Benefits for your Baby:

- Early breast milk is thick and yellow. This is why it is sometimes referred to as “liquid gold.” This milk is very **rich in nutrients and antibodies**. Later on your breast milk becomes thinner but still has all the things your baby needs to grow.
- Breast milk is **easier to digest** than formula.
- Breast milk helps **fight disease**.

Benefits for You:

- Breastfeeding helps you **save money**. You can save up to \$1500 by not having to buy formula and feeding supplies. You also save money on health care because your baby will get sick less often.
- Breastfeeding makes your daily life easier. You don't have to buy, measure, or mix formula.
- The skin-to-skin contact can **boost oxytocin levels**. Oxytocin is a hormone that helps milk flow and helps to calm the mother.
- Breastfeeding is linked to a **lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and postpartum depression**.

If you cannot breastfeed but still want to provide your baby with all the benefits of being breastfed, you can use pumps to obtain your milk and store it for the next time your baby feeds.

Different Pumps you can use:

- **Hand:** massage and compress your breast
- **Manual Pump:** These cost about \$30-\$50. There is a higher risk of breast infection.
- **Automatic Electric Breast Pump:** These cost anywhere from \$150-\$250.
- You should always wash the pumps with soap and water and let them air dry to prevent germs from getting into them.

Storing Breast Milk:

- You can **use clean glass bottles, hard BPA-free plastic bottles, or milk storage bags**. Do not use disposable bottle liners or other plastic bags.
- You should refrigerate or freeze the milk after it has been expressed. If you plan on freezing the milk, do not fill the bottle to the top, store the milk in the back of the freezer, and wait to tighten the bottle cap after the milk is frozen.

Thawing or Warming Breast Milk:

- When thawing frozen milk, you can either leave it in the fridge overnight, or hold it under warm running water. Never microwave the milk as this can create hotspots in the milk, which can burn your baby. After warming the milk, you should swirl the bottle and drop some on your wrist to test the hotness. It should be comfortably warm.
- Do not refreeze thawed breast milk. If you do not finish it within 24 hours, throw it out.