

# Why is Breastfeeding Important?

Health Canada and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend **exclusive breastfeeding from birth to six months**. This means that a baby receives only breastmilk until solid foods are introduced at 6 months, with continued breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond.

**Any amount of breastmilk provides many benefits for you and your baby.**

The more breastmilk your baby gets and the longer you breastfeed, the greater the health benefits are for you both.



**Not breastfeeding increases YOUR BABY'S risk of:**

- Asthma
- Severe diarrhea
- Ear infection
- Lung infection
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Obesity and diabetes
- Childhood leukemia

**Not breastfeeding increases YOUR risk of:**

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Postpartum hemorrhage
- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer

**Things to consider when making an informed decision about feeding your baby:**

- **Breastmilk is designed for human babies.** Your body produces milk that's specially designed to meet your baby's needs.
- **Any amount of breastmilk is beneficial** - it does not have to be all or nothing!
- **Breastmilk and formula are not the same.** Formula gives your baby the nutrients they need to grow, but it doesn't provide the same immune support or health benefits as breastmilk.
- **Using formula can have risks.** It can affect breastfeeding, change your baby's gut health, and increase their risk for allergies.
- **Breastfeeding has other benefits.** It's always available, environmentally friendly, not impacted by shortages or recalls, and is less expensive than buying formula.
- **Returning to exclusive breastfeeding after using formula can be challenging** if your breastmilk supply was not well-established or protected in the first few weeks.