

Benefits of Breastfeeding

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ALL of us know that a mother's milk is best for her baby, and there are several benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for the baby and the mother. Let's look at some frequently asked questions on Breastfeeding. We spoke to Dr Maimoona Ahmed, Consultant Obstetrician, Fernandez Hospital to know more about breastfeeding.

When should I start preparing for breastfeeding?

The preparation starts right from the antenatal period. Attending childbirth classes helps in knowing what to do and how to do it. This reduces the anxiety associated with breastfeeding. Irrespective of the size and shape of the breast or nipples, most mothers are able to feed their babies successfully.

When should I start breastfeeding?

The first hour after birth is called the golden hour for the baby. This is the time you should start breastfeeding. Even after a cesarean section, the baby is given to the mother for skin-to-skin contact. We know that this time is precious for the mother and the baby, and we must ensure a healthy bonding and breastfeeding initiation.

How often should I feed my baby?

Your baby should be fed on demand, which means that you should feed whenever your baby asks for it.

This is called Responsive Feeding. This could mean every couple of hours, especially during the initial few weeks, with at least 8-12 feeds in 24 hours.

Breast milk secretion depends on how often you feed



the baby, so latch on the baby as much as possible.

What methods will improve breastmilk production?

The main stimulant for milk production is the psychological stimulation your baby has on your breastfeeding hormones.

Seeing your baby, listening to the sounds your baby makes, touching and cuddling your baby, getting into a good position while feeding and being confident about feeding your baby will ensure good milk production. There is no evidence that any specific medications or powders help improve breastmilk production.

On the other hand, pacifier use or giving bottle feeds will cause nipple confusion and problems for your baby to breastfeed, so these should be avoided.

What kind of care must I take while breastfeeding?

Make sure you're on a healthy, balanced diet and are well-hydrated. Continue your Calcium and Vitamin D supplements.

Sit in a comfortable position with your back and arms well supported.



Bring the baby towards you, do not bend towards the baby. This will avoid back-ache and muscle cramps.

The baby should latch on properly to your breast. Otherwise, you may have sore nipples and experience pain. There is no need to wash the nipples with soap and water.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

If your baby is putting on expected weight, is passing urine and motions as per norm and is sleeping well after the feeds, then all these are indications that your baby is getting enough milk.

If you have any doubts, you can meet the lactation consultant for corrective measures in breastfeeding. You can also consult the paediatrician who will check your baby.

For how long should I breastfeed my baby?

Your baby needs exclusive breast milk till six months of age. After this period, you can continue to breastfeed with other food additions.

The World Health Organization recommends that breastfeeding can continue up to two years of age.

I hope this will be helpful to you in your delightful journey with the little one. Remember to be patient with yourself and your baby and trust your body.