

Information for breastfeeding military mothers



RISKS OF NOT BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding and breastmilk is the biological norm for mothers and babies. This handout will provide detailed, scientific information on the risks of not breastfeeding and/or providing breastmilk to your baby. Even if you are only able to breastfeed for a short time, your baby's immune system will benefit from breastmilk. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding your baby for at least the first year of life and thereafter for as long as you both desire. Your baby should receive only breast milk for the first six months, and then introduce other solids in addition to breastmilk.

Why is mother's milk special?

- Breastmilk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants. Mother's milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein needed for your baby's growth and development. Most babies find it easier to digest breastmilk than they do formula.
- Breastmilk has disease-fighting cells called antibodies that help protect infants from germs, illness, and even SIDS. Infant formula cannot match the exact chemical makeup of human milk, especially the cells, hormones, and antibodies that fight disease.

Risks of not breastfeeding for baby

There are hundreds of scientific studies showing that not breastfeeding affects your child at every stage of life. Compared to breastfed babies, babies who do not receive their mother's milk have:

- **More ear infections:** 23% more infections among babies who did not receive any mother's milk and 50% more infections if they did not receive mother's milk for at least 3 months.
- **More respiratory infections:** 27% more infections during the months baby was not breastfed and 72% more hospitalizations for those babies not breastfed for at least 4 months.
- **More gastrointestinal infections:** 64% more episodes of vomiting and 53% more hospital admissions for diarrhea.
- **Increased risk of death from SIDS:** 36% more deaths among babies who did not receive any mother's milk and 50% more deaths among babies who did not receive at least 1 month or more of breastfeeding.
- **Increased risk of childhood cancers:** Not breastfeeding increases the risk of childhood leukemia by 19%, similar increases are also seen for lymphoma and Hodgkin's disease.
- **Increased risk of NEC:** A dangerous and sometime fatal condition seen in NICU babies. Formula use increases NEC by 38%.
- **More likely to develop asthma:** Not breastfeeding for at least 3 months increases asthma by 27%, for families with a history of asthma the increase is 40%.
- **More likely to develop type 1 or type 2 diabetes:** Not breastfeeding for at least 3 months increases Type 1 diabetes by 19-27% and Type 2 by 39%.
- **Decreased atopic dermatitis:** Not breastfeeding increases atopic dermatitis by 42%.
- Increased allergies overall.
- More likely to be obese as adults.
- Increased response to pain (higher heart rate and more crying) in formula-fed infants.
- Less likely to maintain normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels throughout life.
- Decreased vision and hand-eye coordination.
- Improper jaw development increasing need for braces later in life.

Risks of not breastfeeding for mom

Besides the health risks for your baby, not breastfeeding has risks for mom's health too. Many scientific studies show that not breastfeeding has an impact on your health now and into the future.

- **Increased blood pressure:** Not breastfeeding increases systolic and diastolic blood pressure through 6 months.
- **Increased risk of breast and ovarian cancers:** For each year of not breastfeeding there is a 4.3% increase in breast cancer. Each month of not breastfeeding the risk of ovarian cancer is increased by 2%.
- **Increased risk of postpartum depression:** Not breastfeeding increases the risk of PPD.
- **Increased risk of type 2 diabetes:** Each year of not breastfeeding the risk of type 2 diabetes is increased by 15%.
- **Increased risk of cardiovascular disease:** Not breastfeeding increases the risk of hypertension by 42.1%, diabetes by 5.3%, hyperlipidemia by 14.3%, and coronary heart disease by 23%.
- **Higher risk of metabolic syndrome:** Not breastfeeding increases the prevalence of insulin resistance, dyslipidemia, hypertension and obesity.
- **Decreased bone health:** Not breastfeeding increases the risk of hip fractures by 13% for every 6 months of not breastfeeding. Not breastfeeding decreases bone mineral density and increases osteoporosis after menopause.
- **Increased risk of rheumatoid arthritis:** Decreased duration of breastfeeding increases the risk of RA.
- **Decreased weight loss:** Formula feeding does not burn extra calories, making it harder to lose the pounds of pregnancy.
- **Increased postpartum bleeding (lochia):** Not breastfeeding means the uterus does not contract naturally due to the release of oxytocin and makes it harder to get it back to its original size and increases any bleeding you may have after giving birth.
- **Shorter duration without menstruation:** Formula use increases the quicker return of normal ovulation and menstrual cycles.
- Decreased amount of sleep even without night-time feedings.
- Lack of breastfeeding hormones (oxytocin and prolactin) decrease feelings of closeness and bonding.
- Bottles and nipples to clean and sterilize.
- Formula is not always available, needs to be mixed with sterile water and at heated to the right temperature.

Risks of not breastfeeding for everyone

Besides the health risks for you and your baby, there are many other reasons to consider when deciding whether or not to begin or continue breastfeeding.

- Not breastfeeding increases the risk of using formula contaminated with pathogens or adulterated with other contaminants, powdered formula is NOT sterile.
- Not breastfeeding increases the risk of Bisphenol (BPA) in bottles and formula, which can lead to cancers later in life.
- Formula use is expensive. Depending on the brand of formula, parents will spend between \$1,160 and \$3,915 per year.
- Not breastfeeding increases costs for health care. Over \$13 billion a year could be saved if 90% of new mothers breastfed for at least 6 months. Individual families could save nearly \$500/year by breastfeeding due to reduction in respiratory illnesses, otitis media and gastrointestinal illnesses.
- Not breastfeeding increases absenteeism in employees by upwards of 50%.