

Breast Feeding: - Blessing for Mother and Child

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding is a practice that can ensure nutrients and help in infant growth and development. Moreover, breastfeeding is proven to reduce infant mortality, prevents child from diseases and benefits the mother as well.

Keywords: Breastfeeding; Infant Mortality; Human Milk

Introduction

Breastfeeding and human milk are the significant components of the infant's nutrition. Since there are various medical and neurodevelopmental benefits of breastfeeding, infants' nutrition has to be discussed as a public health issue instead of a lifestyle choice [1]. Children should receive breast milk throughout the first year of life or even longer. Therefore, since breastfeeding has benefits for both women and children, it should be considered a medical indication rather than a separate option for feeding.

Benefits for Children

According to [2], one of the main advantages of breast milk is that it has multiple components that have a positive impact on child's health. Moreover, as the child grows, the components of the milk change according to one's needs. As a result, breastfeeding mothers protect their children from various diseases such as anemia, calcium deficiency, iodine, and frequent severe infectious diseases. The primary biologically active components of breast milk are immunoglobulins, lysozyme, lactoferrin, and leukocytes [3]. With the help of these components, the baby becomes protected from infections. Another advantage of breast milk is that as the child gets older, the concentration of immunoglobulins in milk increases [4]. This leads to the fact that older children maintain strong immune support with mother's milk. According to Gunderson et al. long-term feeding helps to decrease child's risk of getting diabetes. What is more, breast milk reduces risk of maintaining atherosclerosis and other diseases.

When it comes to another component of mother's milk-oligosaccharides, it protects a child from allergies with the help of development of its microflora [5]. It is also important to state that breast milk contains proteins. This component helps to promote the development of the child's brain. What is more, milk from the mother's breast forms a protective film on the child's teeth [6]. As a result, biologically active substances protect children's teeth from harmful microorganisms and do not let them multiply in the oral cavity. That is why those children that consume breast milk are less prone to caries [7]. With the growth of a child, milk in the breast changes too. During the second year of lactation, milk becomes fatter, and the number of antibodies in it increases. As a result, breastfeeding provides natural protection from infections. Feeding after a year also contributes to the more natural formation of speech. Therefore, breast milk has a significant amount of ingredients that protect a child from various diseases and lead to one's faster development.

Benefits for Mother

It is essential to mention that the physical state of the mother after childbirth is weak. Nevertheless, breastfeeding helps a woman to get over it. When the baby eats breast milk, the uterus of the mother shrinks. That is why it decreases faster in those mothers who feed their children with breast milk, than in those who do not. Another significant factor is that during breastfeeding, mother and a child establish close psychological contact. This is

also why infants are sensitive to the mother's mental state. During the period of lactation, a woman's body produces special hormones that cause feelings of satisfaction, reduce anxiety and give rest. As a result, breastfeeding mothers have the mental strength to overcome problems that occur after the birth of a child. Moreover, these hormones help to go through insomnia. Another benefit that a mother gets with breastfeeding is that such women are less likely to experience postpartum depression. As stated below, lactation helps to produce specific hormones that increase the feeling of satisfaction.

What is more, mothers who feed their children with breast milk have a lower risk of developing diabetes by 4-12% for each year of breastfeeding [8]. However, if the disease is already developed, breastfeeding has no effect. Women who continue to breastfeed for 12-23 months are significantly less likely to suffer from cardiovascular diseases. A vital factor is that the researchers prove that lactation helps to decrease the risk of breast and ovarian cancer. On average, each year of breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast cancer by 4.3% [9]. Nevertheless, it is vital to remember that lactation is a very individual process that cannot be predicted [10]. That is why if a woman has no or little milk, one should understand that there are many criteria that affect this.

Premature Infants

Breastfeeding has a great importance for premature children. It has a significant health-improving effect on such babies. Among breastfed infants in this category, the number of hospitalizations due to digestive and respiratory problems is significantly reduced [11]. What is more, premature children that receive breast milk are noticed to have better state and the length of their stay in the intensive care unit is reduced. That is why premature children must receive breast milk. There are also options, such as donor milk, which can be stored for 96 hours at a proper temperature.

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Conclusion

All in all, various studies prove the benefits of breastfeeding both for the child and the mother; that is why each woman should practice it. Moreover, if a woman refuses to breastfeed, it might negatively affect the child's health. Therefore, breastfeeding should be considered as a medical indication, not a separate option for the mother and baby.

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