Benefits of Breastfeeding

With August declared National Breastfeeding Month, we asked Deborah Perl, lactation consultant at the Lactation Center of Magee-Women’s Hospital of UPMC, about benefits of breastfeeding. The lactation center is a fully equipped resource to all new mothers and infants.

Top Benefits of Breastfeeding for Mothers and Babies

- Supports Baby’s Growth & Development
- Lowers SIDS Risk (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)
- Reduces Cancer Risk
- Aids Mom’s Weight Loss
- Boosts Immune System
- Greater IQ

What is a lactation consultant?

Lactation consultants are certified by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners and are breastfeeding specialists trained to teach mothers how to feed their baby. For some women, breastfeeding comes very naturally, and for others it takes time, patience and a little extra support. Our trained lactation staff sees all new mothers during their postpartum hospital stay upon request or referral to ensure they are comfortable with breastfeeding. We teach moms breastfeeding techniques, we discuss feeding schedules and talk to moms about their fears and frustrations. We also help mothers who want to breastfeed but may need to, or choose to, supplement. We strongly feel that all new moms should be supported and encouraged, regardless of their feeding decision.

What are some common challenges and available resources for breastfeeding mothers?
Some common challenges include uncomfortable or sore breasts and concern about the baby getting enough food. The Magee Lactation Center has plenty of available resources for mothers experiencing challenges including postpartum consultations for mothers with ongoing breastfeeding problems and a 24-hour service line to assist with any questions. The center also has recently expanded to a full-service retail center offering breast pump rentals, nursing and maternity bras, nursing pillows and a complete line of breastfeeding aids and accessories.

How does Magee support breastfeeding mothers?

We provide education and support to mothers before birth and throughout their breastfeeding journey. From prenatal classes to bedside consultations, we support a mother's decision to breastfeed. In addition to providing resources for new mothers, the Magee Lactation Center provides support and education to hospital staff. We train registered nurses to properly assist new mothers with their babies.

10 good things you need to know about exclusive* breastfeeding

1. saves life and protects baby against disease with antibacterial agents.
2. provides all nutrients baby needs for the first 6 months.
3. ensures clean and safe source of food, especially in emergencies.
4. makes child grow strong and intelligent.
5. breaks the cycle of diarrhea and malnutrition.
6. bonds mother and child.
7. reduces the mother's risk of ovarian and breast cancer.
8. helps space pregnancies, a natural method of birth control.
9. saves money by not having to buy infant formula and feeding equipment.
10. protects the environment with no need for packaging and disposal.

*exclusive means 100% breastmilk, no water, no solid food, nothing else.
The Benefits of Breastfeeding

By Stefania Willis, RDH, MA, and Rachel Kurlander, BA

New evidence suggests that breastfeeding may have long-term positive effects on children's oral health.

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