

BREAST MILK ONLY for the FIRST SIX MONTHS

The AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continuing to breastfeed while you start your baby on new foods after six months.

Breast milk is all your baby needs for the first six months of life.

- Babies do not need food or fluid other than breast milk. Water is not necessary, even in hot weather.
- Introducing other food or fluids can cause problems for breastfeeding and may decrease your baby's desire for breast milk.
- Your breast milk contains a protein that enables your baby's body to use the iron stores that were obtained from your body during pregnancy. If your baby is given other food or liquid that has iron, the special breast milk protein cannot work and the baby may become anemic.
- Breastfed babies have fewer illnesses than those who eat or drink other foods or fluids during the first six months. They also have less pneumonia, other respiratory illnesses, intestinal diseases and fewer ear infections.
- During babies' first six months, they do not produce enough stomach acid to digest foods or fluids other than breast milk. Their intestines contain small, net-like pores and if given other foods, the nonhuman proteins can enter through the pores into your baby's body and cause allergies. Around six months, the pores in babies intestines close up and they can eat other foods.
- Around six months, babies' mouths and tongues have developed enough that it is easier for them to eat from a spoon and swallow properly.

Breast milk should still be your baby's main source of nutrition for the first year.

It is important to introduce solids after six months so your baby will learn to eat different foods. It is also important to continue breastfeeding beyond six months until the second birthday. By gradually increasing meals, breastfeeding before each meal and before and after sleep periods, your baby will continue breastfeeding. Important fats found only in breast milk help your baby develop a better brain, eyesight and digestive system.

Breastfeeding may continue longer than your infant's first year of life.

Breastfeeding offers comfort and emotional support and the disease-fighting components of breast milk help babies stay healthy. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continuing to breastfeed as long as you both desire; the longer you breastfeed the greater the benefits for you and your child. You can breastfeed during pregnancy, as well as nurse an older child along with an infant.