

Breastmilk: Nature's First Vaccine and Complete Nutrition for Newborns

The early years of a child's life build the foundation for their growth and development.

Early childhood development determines how your baby thinks, learns, and behaves and in the long run determines their ability to succeed in life. Breastfeeding is essential for child survival and healthy development.

Containing essential antibodies that protect children against diseases, breastmilk is a safe, nutritious, and sustainable source of good nutrition for children. Yet despite the known benefits, millions of children around the world are not exclusively breastfed (without milk, water, bottle-feeding, etc.) in their first six months of life, putting them at increased risk of illness, death, reduced learning potential, and health complications into adulthood.

UNICEF and WHO recommend that infants be breastfed within 1 hour of birth, and exclusively breastfed in their first six months of life (with no other foods and liquids provided). After six months of age, babies should begin eating home-cooked and nutritious semi-solid foods, ensuring adequate diversity (of food groups), frequency and age-appropriate quantity, while continuing to breastfeed till 2 years of age or beyond. Focusing on complementary feeding is essential to ensure your child can gradually move to solid and diverse food consumption.

From the first hour of a baby's life through age two or later, breastfeeding protects against illness and death. Breastfeeding also reduces the burden of childhood and maternal illness, lowering healthcare costs and creating healthier families.

Exclusive Breastfeeding

Nourishment and protection for your child from the start:

Start with the first #healthydiet for your baby.

- Breastmilk is the safest, purest, and most natural food that provides essential nutrition to the child.
- Colostrum, rich in antibodies, is the first natural immunization for the child, protecting from disease and death.
- Breastfeeding within the first hour of birth protects the child and increases their chances of survival by 14 times.
- Providing any feed other than breastmilk (even water, honey, or ghutti) can delay and disrupt the production of the mother's milk and also pose a risk of infection to the child.
- Breastmilk, a potent medicine tailored to each child, protects against illnesses like ear infections, diarrhoea, and pneumonia.

- Breastfeeding not only protects the child from hypothermia through the mother's body heat but also strengthens the bond between the mother and child.

The first hour of birth is the golden hour for newborns' growth, development, and survival.

More than just food for babies, breastmilk is a potent medicine for disease prevention. That is tailored to the needs of each child.

Breastmilk contains nutrients that support healthy brain development and cognitive functions. Rich in protein, sugar, iron, calcium, and vitamins, mother's milk is the complete food for a child for the first six months.

The first milk, colostrum, which is rich in antibodies, is the first natural vaccine, protecting the child from infections.

Breastfeeding within the first hour increases the chances of successful breastfeeding as babies are alert, ready to learn, and their reflexes are strong.

Immediate skin-to-skin contact helps regulate newborns' body temperature and exposes them to beneficial bacteria, which helps in building their immune systems.

– www.unicef.org/india/stories/breastmilk-benefits, August 2, 2025