

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Benefits of Breastmilk

All babies benefit from their mother's milk. Antibodies are present in your milk and are like an antibiotic that your body makes to protect your baby from illnesses and infections. Any amount of breastmilk your baby gets is beneficial. The longer your baby gets your milk, the greater the benefits will last for you and your baby.

Breastfeeding is an amazing bonding time for you and your baby. Most women can produce breastmilk. If your baby cannot breastfeed, you can still pump your breastmilk. By pumping now, you will help maintain your milk supply. This will prepare you for when your baby is ready to breastfeed. Maintaining your milk to meet your baby's needs requires pumping 8-10 times a day, about every 2-3 hours.

Breastfeeding is beneficial to mom, too. Every time you breastfeed or pump your breastmilk, you decrease your chances of having cancer and osteoporosis.

There are some medical reasons that prevent a small number of women from breastfeeding or making breastmilk. This handout is not to make you feel guilty if you are unable to breastfeed or pump milk for your baby. Lactation consultants are available to help you. Ask your doctor or nurse to contact a lactation consultant for support.



**Breastmilk is perfect for  
your baby.**

# The benefits for your baby:

- A baby's intestine is immature and not fully developed. It needs the strong antibodies found in breastmilk right after delivery (**colostrum**) and breastmilk to help build the lining of the intestine. This helps protect from germs.
- Breastmilk is the first natural immunization your baby gets.
- If you are sick, your milk will be higher in antibodies to protect your baby.
- Antibodies in a mother's milk provide higher protection against blood infections (**sepsis**). If a baby does become sick, breastmilk can help the baby fight against infection.
- A baby's nose, mouth, and lungs are protected by antibodies that coat the mucous membranes with specific antibodies that protect these little moist areas from bad bacteria.
- Intelligence (IQ) measurements are 8-9 points higher for those babies who breastfeed. Breastmilk helps nourish and build brain cells.
- Breastmilk will continue to work for your baby as he or she grows by increasing the protection against asthma, diabetes, certain cancers, and obesity.



**Breastmilk is the first natural immunization your baby gets.**

# Benefits for your preterm baby:

If your baby was born early, your body knows this and will make milk specific to match your baby's needs.

- Preterm milk is higher in protein, sodium, fat, antibodies, and other germ-fighting cells.
- A premature baby's intestine is even more immature and this makes the baby's body more in danger of infections.

- A small number of premature babies can get an infection that can attack their intestines. This infection is called **necrotizing enterocolitis** (NEC). This illness can attack very quickly and may even require surgery. Breastmilk lowers a baby's risk of NEC by keeping the intestines healthier.
  - For more information, ask your doctor or nurse for a handout on NEC.
- Breastmilk is easier on your baby's immature kidneys.
- Eyes develop better because there are special fats in mother's milk that heals the eyes and improves vision. **Retinopathy of the prematurity** (ROP) is a common problem in premature infants that can cause vision problems. Breastmilk helps prevent ROP.
  - For more information, ask your doctor or nurse for a handout on ROP.

## A word on being discouraged:

It is a common feeling to become tired of pumping. It is hard to keep pumping your breastmilk when you are not with your baby. It is hard to bring back your milk supply once it has gone away.

Even those that are closest to you may not understand how important your milk is for your baby. Try to focus on comments that are supportive. Remember that your breastmilk benefits both you and your baby.



If you have any questions or concerns,  
 call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

## Now that you have read this:

- Tell your nurse, dietitian, or lactation specialist the benefits of breastmilk.  
(Check when done.)

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
Twitter: [@emilycenter](https://twitter.com/emilycenter)  
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**Disclaimer**

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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## Benefits of Breastmilk

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

### Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
Health Education Specialist  
Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**