
The Importance And Role Of Breastfeeding

I am taking this opportunity to address why breastfeeding is the most favorable method to feed an infant. Couples who are about to have a child or currently have a newborn must understand how they can positively impact their child's life with the power of breastfeeding. I chose this topic because the breastfeeding versus formula feeding debate caught my attention. I can envision a short list of pros and cons for each feeding technique, but I was interested in doing more detailed research. In general, I wanted to see if I could conclude that breastfeeding is a more beneficial process than formula feeding for a child's development. Therefore, it is imperative to know how breastfeeding affects both parents differently and the child due to all of the health benefits and the strong bond that is created.

First off, let's talk about why it is so important for a newborn to consume breast milk. According to Carole Lucia and Jessica Hartshorn, a reliable source called the World Health Organization recommends that all babies should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their life in an article called "The Benefits of Breastfeeding." The milk that is made by a woman's breast right after delivering a baby is called colostrum (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). This type of milk is also referred to as "liquid gold" because it is very high in protein and contains the most powerful antibodies (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). The specific kind of protein found in breast milk is much easier for a baby to digest than the proteins found in formula milk, causing babies who are breastfed to have fewer bellyaches (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). Likewise, Colin Binns, MiKyung Lee, and Wah Yun Low discuss more benefits and statistics that support my argument in a scholarly journal article called "The Long-Term Public Health Benefits of Breastfeeding." The natural antibodies in breast milk help protect a baby from developing infections and chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and a few types of cancer (Binns et al., 2016).

Most importantly, breastfeeding promotes a secure attachment between a mother and their infant because this kind of skin to skin contact gives the baby an explicit sense of assurance that he or she is deeply cared for and loved (Brooks, 2013). I learned more about this concept in *The Process of Parenting* by Jane Brooks because she points out that if a mother can act as a stable base for an infant to trust, their bond in the future will be even stronger. The secure attachment between a mother and a baby also allows mothers to read their baby's unique indications to signal that they are full, so mothers will not overfeed them and prevent them from becoming obese in the future (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). To further illustrate this fact, "infants who are not breastfed are 33% more likely to become obese children" (Binns et al., 2016).

Moreover, breastfeeding has an immense impact on mothers and can empower them. While producing milk, mothers burn about 300 to 500 calories a day to lose their excess pregnancy weight (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). Also, a hormone called oxytocin is released while a woman breastfeeds causing their uterus to contract back to a normal size (Lucia & Hartshorn, 2019). During this period, a woman's body has the opportunity to heal naturally after delivering their child (Binns et al., 2016). Credible studies have proven that breastfeeding lowers a mother's risk for ovarian cancer and breast cancer (Binns et al., 2016). In turn, parenting is a process and 'mothers have the natural capability to nourish their child in a special way (Brooks, 2013). After reviewing the flexible definition of a parent, it is clear that a parent should foster their child's personal growth and protect them any way they can (Brooks, 2013).

Unfortunately, there is a big misconception surrounding who is involved in the breastfeeding process. Women might have the breasts, but men provide informal support that is as influential as the woman supplying their child with breast milk (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). Kristen Mitchell-Box and Kathryn Braun provides their readers with a lot of unforeseen information about a man's role in the breastfeeding process in an academic journal called "Fathers' Thoughts on Breastfeeding and Implications for a Theory-Based Intervention." As a matter of fact, after surveying fourteen fathers that were randomly selected, Mitchell-Box discovered that men strongly believe that breastfeeding in public is inappropriate, formula feeding is way more convenient, and they feel excluded from the whole process (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). For this reason, I am here to say that men matter in the breastfeeding process. Mitchell-Box highlights this idea by explaining that "expanding the breastfeeding dyad to a triad is crucial to help increase breastfeeding initiation and duration and enable the male partner to have more involvement in the breastfeeding process" (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). This claim illustrates how the mother, father, and infant all play their significant roles. Fathers that play an active part in their child's life, starting from birth set their children up for success in the future (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). The recommendations I have for fathers might sound like tedious tasks, but they would be alleviating stress off of their partner and child, so they can breastfeed peacefully. Meanwhile, fathers can take care of their other children, put in a load of laundry, and shop for groceries. This knowledge about children's developmental patterns and unique needs help parents be more sufficient caregivers (Brooks, 2013).

Ultimately, I think it is easy to agree that the research I have shared reiterates the importance of breastfeeding and how it promotes the healthy development of children. The positive emotional, physical, and cognitive effects that breastfeeding has on babies are extraordinary. I will admit, the transition to parenthood and making decisions will be tricky; however, partners must plan how they are going to raise a child respectively (Brooks, 2013). My last recommendation would be to learn more about breastfeeding through a nationwide nutrition program called Women, Infant, and Children (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). This renowned program has a great website and walk-in clinics scattered throughout the United States to help anyone with questions or concerns related to this topic or anything associated with parenting (Mitchell-Box & Braun, 2012). Breastfeeding is a worthwhile commitment that results in amazing outcomes, and I can confidently recommend it to any couple with a newborn baby.