



Breastfeeding
is great for
babies and
moms.



More than half of African American moms start out breastfeeding their babies. Why? Because breastfeeding makes babies healthy and strong and builds a feeling of love.

Breastfeeding helps you keep your baby healthy

When you breastfeed, your baby is less likely to get sick, or have to stay in the hospital due to illness. Because your breast milk is specially created for your baby, it can help prevent:

- Ear infections
- Diarrhea
- Respiratory illnesses (trouble breathing)
- Childhood obesity
- Childhood leukemia (blood cancer)

Feeding your baby only breast milk can cut the risk of SIDS by over 70 percent. (SIDS is the sudden death of a healthy baby without warning.)

Breastfeeding is also good for **your** health. Studies show that the longer a woman breastfeeds, the lower her risk of developing breast cancer and ovarian cancer. It also lowers her risk of diabetes.

Learning about breastfeeding now will help you be prepared when your baby comes. Keep reading to see why breastfeeding is great — for your baby and you.

Breastfeeding tips

- Before your baby is born, tell your partner, family, and friends that you plan to breastfeed and need their support.
- In the hospital, tell your doctor and nurse that you don't want your baby to have formula unless there is a medical reason.
- It's important to start breastfeeding as soon as you can after your baby is born.
- Most hospitals will have an expert on breastfeeding who can answer questions and address problems. This expert will help you learn how to hold your baby when feeding and can show you how to use a breast pump. Before leaving the hospital, ask your nurse or the breastfeeding expert to make sure you are doing okay with nursing. They can also teach you how to keep up your milk supply if you are away from your baby.
- Breast milk is easier for babies to digest than formula, so your baby may need to eat more often.
- If you are feeling pain when you breastfeed, the baby might not be latched correctly. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or a breastfeeding expert about the pain.
- You may worry that you're not making enough milk, but your baby is likely getting more than you think at each feeding. Regardless of your baby's weight, a newborn's stomach is only the size of an almond.
- If you are concerned about your ability to breastfeed when you go back to work or school, there are laws that protect your right to do so.

Breastfeeding helps you save money

- Feeding your baby formula will cost you more than \$1,500 a year (or about \$30 a week).
- Because breastfed babies are less likely to get sick, you will miss fewer days at work to stay home and take care of your baby.

Here's where to learn more

Visit www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural. You'll find even more tips, videos, answers to common questions, and much more.

Another good way to learn about breastfeeding is to talk to other moms who do it. They can give you the advice and help you may need to keep going.

There are trained counselors available to talk to you at the National Breastfeeding Helpline, **1-800-994-9662**.

About It's Only Natural

Breastfeeding provides mothers and their babies with a healthy start. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created *It's Only Natural* to offer African American moms the knowledge, help, and support they need to breastfeed. You'll find all this at www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural. Breastfeeding. It's only natural with mother's love, mother's milk.



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