

Breastfeeding keeps mom and baby healthy

The Standard Journal · 10 Aug 2022 · A3 · Tifani Kinard is Vice President of Rural Health for Atrium Health Floyd.

Giving your child a healthy start can play a role in ensuring their overall health as they go through life. One of the most helpful things a mom can do to for her little one is to breastfeed. August is National Breastfeeding Month, a perfect time to consider the benefits of breastfeeding to both baby and mom.

The American Academy of Pediatrics had already recommended that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. The AAP recently issued a statement supporting the continuation of breastfeeding for at least two years.

Breastfeeding is well recognized as a means to assure the health of infants and young children. Mother's milk fosters optimal growth and development of the baby's brain, immune system and general physiology and is a vital factor in preventing common illnesses, including diarrhea and infections of the ear and urinary tract.

The act of breastfeeding releases growth hormones, promotes healthy oral development and establishes a strong bond between mother and baby. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months reduces the risk of environment-borne illness, malnutrition and food sensitization and allergy.

Breastfeeding provides the mother with health benefits as well. Breastfeeding shortly after birth decreases the mother's risk of hemorrhage or other complications. In the long term, breastfeeding can protect the mother from breast, ovarian and uterine cancers and urinary tract infections; it can boost her immune system and can help delay the next pregnancy. It can reduce her stress level by keeping her infant healthy and well nourished.

The CDC also lists these other benefits:

l Breastfed babies have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, Type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome. Breastfed babies are also less likely to have ear infections and stomach bugs.

l Breast milk shares antibodies from the mother with her baby. These antibodies help babies develop a strong immune system and protect them from illnesses.

l Breastfeeding can reduce the mother's risk of type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Even with this growing body of evidence about the health benefits of breastfeeding, some mothers are receiving no information about the advantages of breastfeeding, or worse, are receiving misinformation. With the proper support and education from both lactation consultants nurses and family, a mother can successfully breastfeed. And, if a mother had trouble with the first breastfeeding experience, that does not mean her second opportunity will mimic her first. Your breastfeeding success is not tied to any genetic condition.

You actually can consume some caffeine when you're breastfeeding. Less than 2% of caffeine actually makes its way into a mother's breast milk, so a cup or two of coffee or tea, or even a Coke, are okay for nursing moms.

Women who get sick and are breastfeeding should continue to breastfeed. It actually provides protection to your baby, because when mothers contract a virus, antibodies produced get into the breast milk, providing immunity for the baby. So keep breastfeeding.

Also, most medicines a mom might be taking won't affect the baby. If you have a question, contact your doctor or a lactation consultant.

Normal breastfeeding should not hurt. There might be a little discomfort the first few days, or a little discomfort at the start of the latch, but if you have a two-week-old who is hurting you, you need to visit a lactation consultant.

At Atrium Health Floyd, we offer a Prepared for Breastfeeding class. To search for an upcoming class and to learn more visit [floyd.org/classes-events](https://www.floyd.org/classes-events).