

Can I Combine Breastfeeding and Bottles? But Should I?

It is possible to combine both methods of infant feeding. However, the first 3 to 4 weeks are an important time for your baby to be learning the proper sucking skills at the breast. Introduction of bottles before that time can cause confusion for your baby as he refines his breastfeeding skills. It is much easier for an infant to get milk from a fast flowing bottle. Some prefer this fast flowing bottle and will have trouble returning to the breast. Working for the milk is an important part of breastfeeding for the infant. After those initial weeks of infant learning, another person can feed your baby an occasional bottle of breastmilk.

Formula Feeding Facts

Introducing formula before your milk supply is well established can cause you to make less milk. It can take from 6 to 12 weeks to establish a good milk supply. Feeding formula too early can also result in engorgement because your breasts are not being properly emptied

Because formula takes longer to digest, your baby may not want to nurse as frequently. Your breasts can become engorged and uncomfortable when the baby doesn't want to nurse. This can also lead to a lower milk supply because your breasts aren't being emptied. Breast emptying is what will stimulate your breasts to make more milk. Human milk is easily digested, limiting the need for more complicated mechanical and chemical forms of digestion that produce colicky symptoms in your baby.

Relatively small amounts of formula supplementation of the breastfed baby will result in a shift in the baby's intestinal flora that protects the baby from illness. It can take 2-4 weeks for that intestinal flora to return to the protective state of the breastfed baby.

Your baby's immune system can also be affected by early introduction of formula. This can lead to increased risk for diseases such as diarrhea, Type I diabetes, and possibly asthma.

Breastmilk Feeding Facts

Antibodies in both colostrum and breastmilk coat your baby's gut and provide him with passive immunity until his gut matures and functions better. There are more benefits for exclusively breastfed infants. Formula has no protection against illness. Proteins in breastmilk keep our babies well. Lactoferrin for example, binds iron tightly and keeps it from bacteria. Lactoferrin also encapsulates bacteria, viruses, and fungi, preventing them from entering our babies' system. Secretory IgA coats your baby's gut protecting it from disease.

The antibodies in your breastmilk are specific for the viruses and bacteria in your baby's immediate surroundings, thus protecting him from them until his own immune system is more mature.

There is a decrease in obesity in the breastfed baby. Formula fed infants will consume about 30,000 more calories by age

8 months. Research shows that toddlers that who were exclusively breastfed as infants are able to regulate their own food intake. In addition, your baby may have a reduced incident of obesity.

Infants that are breastfed have lower risk of allergies to food as well as other allergens. The incidence of asthma is only decreased with 4 months of exclusive breastfeeding.

Breastmilk is dynamic and ever changing. The flavor of the breastmilk changes with what the mother eats. It teaches the baby to eat the way the family eats. Breastfed babies go to family foods easier because they have already tasted all of the flavors in their mother's milk.

The protection in the breastmilk changes also. As mom and baby are exposed to different illnesses, the antibodies in the breastmilk change to more fully protect the baby.

The fat content and calories of your breastmilk change to meet the needs of your changing infant both during a feeding and throughout the breastfeeding experience.

Although a baby will still have benefits from some breastmilk, infants that are exclusively breastfed benefit the most.

Most moms will have plenty of milk to feed their breastfed infants. If you are struggling or feel that you need help with your breastfeeding, call and or visit our Lactation Centers. Our Board Certified Lactation Consultants are there to help you.



For help with breastfeeding, call:

University MacDonald Lactation Center:

East: 216-595-5355

West: 440-250-2035

References:

- Supplementation of the Breastfed Baby "Just One Bottle Won't Hurt"—or Will It?; Walker; Retrieved from www.health&learning.com/resources/articles; 10/21/09.
- "Does One Bottle Really Matter" Creating an atmosphere that supports breastfeeding mothers; Arrieta IBCLC, Kristen; Retrieved 10/21/09 from www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/tnal