



August 2019

August 1 - 8 World Breastfeeding Week

11 Benefits of Breastfeeding for Mom and Baby



Breast milk provides optimal nutrition for babies. It has the right amount of nutrients, is easily digested and readily available. While some women are unable to breastfeed, others simply choose not to. Yet studies show breastfeeding has major health benefits, for both the mother and her baby. Benefits 1–5 are for babies, but 6–11 are for mothers.

1. Breast Milk Provides Ideal Nutrition for Babies.

It contains everything the baby needs for the first six months of life, in all the right proportions. Its composition even changes according to the baby's changing needs. The first milk, colostrum, is thick, rich in protein and loaded with beneficial compounds.

2. Breast Milk is loaded with Antibodies. These can help prevent or fight illness in your baby. When the mother is exposed to viruses or bacteria, she starts producing antibodies, which are then secreted into the breast milk and passed to the baby during feeding.

3. Breastfeeding may reduce your baby's risk of many illnesses and diseases. A few of them are ear infections, respiratory infections (bronchitis, pneumonia, colds), and infections in the gut, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), childhood leukemia and allergies. Furthermore, the protective effects of breastfeeding seem to last throughout childhood and even adulthood.

4. Breast Milk Promotes a Healthy Weight. Breastfeeding babies have lower obesity rates than formula-fed babies. They have more leptin (a hormone that helps control appetite), and more beneficial gut bacteria, which may affect fat storage.

5. Breastfeeding May Make Children Smarter. It may affect your baby's brain development and reduce the risk of future behavior and learning problems.

6. Breastfeeding May Help You Lose Weight. It may be harder to lose weight for the first 3 months after delivery. However, it may actually help with weight loss after the first 3 months.

7. Breastfeeding Helps the Uterus Contract. Breastfeeding increases oxytocin production, a hormone that causes contractions in the uterus. It reduces blood loss after delivery and helps the uterus return to its previous smaller size.

8. Mothers Who Breastfeed Have a Lower Risk of Postpartum Depression. They have increased amounts of oxytocin in their system, which encourages caregiving, relaxation and bonding between mother and child.

9. Breastfeeding Reduces Your Disease Risk. Breastfeeding seems to provide the mother with long-term protection against breast and ovarian cancer and several other diseases including high blood pressure, arthritis, high blood fats, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

10. Breastfeeding May Prevent Menstruation. Continued breastfeeding pauses ovulation and menstruation. You may consider this change as an extra benefit. While you're enjoying precious time with your newborn, you won't have to worry about "that time of the month."

11. It Also Saves Time and Money. To top the list, breastfeeding is completely free and requires very little effort. You don't have to worry about buying or mixing formula, cleaning and sterilizing bottles, warming up bottles or calculating your baby's daily needs. Breast milk is always at the right temperature and ready to drink.



Take Home Message. If you are unable to breastfeed, then feeding your baby with formula is still completely fine. It will provide your baby with all the nutrients he/she needs. However, breastfeeding provides many additional health benefits.

As an added bonus, breastfeeding gives you a valid reason to sit down, put your feet up and relax while you bond with your precious newborn.

Written by Adda Bjarnadottir, MS on June 1, 2017



La Leche League USA helps families by offering breastfeeding information, educational, and training. La Leche League Leaders can help if you have breastfeeding questions.

Website: <https://llusa.org/>

Are Recliners Bad for You?

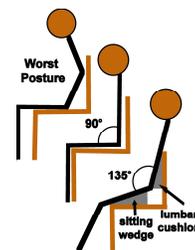
Snubbed by the style conscious, and loved by the sports fanatic, recliners are a matter of taste, but experts disagree on whether they are good for the body.



⇒ One theory has it that recliners promote terrible posture and are thus bad for our backs. Chiropractors will tell you that sitting in general is bad for the spine, putting it in a position it was never intended for. Combine this bad position with the hours many of us spend sitting at our desks, and it's no wonder we suffer aches and pains (and why standing desks have become so popular).

⇒ Others say not so fast. Yes, it comes down to posture, but that simply means we need better recliners. Find one that supports the lower back and promotes good posture, for example.

⇒ According to WebMD, the ideal sitting position is actually one in which you are leaning back a bit, at a 135 degree angle between your body and your thighs. Just be sure that your back and hips are supported.



Find the right chair with the right support—and don't spend hours a day in it—and you should be fine. Get a recliner that induces slouching and spend tons of time in it and you can prepare for pain.

Medications can Contribute to Dry Mouth

In the fall or spring, if you take antihistamines to combat seasonal allergies, you may find yourself with an annoying side effect: Dry mouth.

But, it isn't just antihistamines. Hundreds of medications cause dry mouth including pills for blood pressure, pain, muscle relaxants, anxiety, depression and simple decongestants. Also, health conditions, including diabetes, or treatments such as cancer radiation therapy can cause the condition.



Symptoms of dry mouth include severe painfully dry tongue, choking, sore throat, and hoarseness. It can change the taste of food, cause bad breath, and affect teeth and gums.



HUMIDIFIER

You can get relief, through some prescription medications. However, home care can help.

- Use a humidifier at night.
- Chew sugar-free gum.
- Sip water frequently.
- Avoid sugar, acidic foods, caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Try switching out medications with your doctor's help.

Many dry mouth over-the-counter symptom relievers are available, including special mouthwash that does not contain alcohol. Dry mouth sprays can be helpful at night, but if they don't seem to have staying power, try the gels.

Is Coconut Sugar Healthier than Regular Sugar?

Coconut sugar is known for having a lower glycemic index and being less processed than white sugar. Does either matter?

“Pure & unrefined,” crows the Madhava Coconut Sugar bag.

- Coconut sugar and white sugar each starts with a liquid (coconut palm sap or sugar cane juice) that's then boiled down to form crystals.
- Coconut sugar is brown because it skips white sugar's final refining step. But is that really what *you* would call unrefined? Hardly.
- Coconut sugar has “naturally occurring nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, zinc, iron, B vitamins and amino acids,” adds Madhava. The amounts per teaspoon? Negligible.



Nutiva Coconut Sugar boasts that it has a “lower glycemic index than cane sugar.” That means that it causes less of a spike in blood sugar levels than sucrose (table sugar). But fructose is lower than both, and it's no health food. What's more, studies that feed people low-glycemic foods don't find much benefit anyway.

Bottom line: Coconut sugar is no better than honey, agave, maple, turbinado, or any other added sugar.

The information in this article first appeared in the May 2019 issue of *Nutrition Action Healthletter*.