

# August Is National Breastfeeding Month

August 4 2021 8:45 AM



O'FALLON – HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital's Women and Infants Center recognizes National Breastfeeding Month in August (and World Breastfeeding Week, Aug. 1-7), and the benefits of breastfeeding. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that breastfeeding is supposed to work almost like a newborn's first vaccine, providing vital antibodies and an immunity boost through the mother's milk.

“Breastfeeding, whether by the breast or pumping breast milk, is so important to an infant as it provides protection against many illnesses, while also supporting bonding between the mother and baby,” said Debra Meidel, RN, BSN, nurse manager of the

Women and Infants Center. “For mothers who want to breastfeed but are concerned about COVID, we encourage them to follow the CDC guidelines to wash their hands and wear a mask while their baby is feeding at the breast but want them to know it is very safe to breastfeed their baby.”

The WHO agrees with the CDC that following infection prevention and control measures is essential to prevent contact transmission between COVID-19 suspected or confirmed mothers and their newborns and young infants.

The normal and natural food for a newborn baby is breast milk. Their need for breast milk continues as they grow. The following are a few benefits of breastfeeding:

- **Breast milk is liquid gold.** Colostrum, known as liquid gold, is the thick yellow breast milk that mothers make during pregnancy and just after birth. This milk is very rich in nutrients and antibodies to protect your baby. Although your baby only gets a small amount of colostrum at each feeding, it matches the amount his or her stomach can hold.
- **Breast milk changes as your baby grows.** Colostrum changes into what is called mature milk. By the third to fifth day after birth, this mature breast milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby continue to grow. It is a thinner type of milk than colostrum, but it provides all the nutrients and antibodies your baby needs.
- **Breast milk is easier to digest.** For most babies, especially premature babies, breast milk is easier to digest than formula. The proteins in formula are made from cow's milk and it takes time for babies' stomachs to adjust to digesting them.
- **Breast milk fights disease.** The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breast milk protect babies from illness such as ear infections, asthma and gastrointestinal infections, among others.
- **Breastfeeding is beneficial to mothers as well.** Mothers who breastfeed tend to, recover from childbirth faster, and are at a lower risk for developing breast and ovarian cancer.

**Breastfeeding Support** - For mothers needing additional support to be successful in their breastfeeding journey, St. Elizabeth's Hospital's Women and Infants Center offers breastfeeding classes. Breastfeeding class dates for the rest of 2021\* are September 9, October 3 and 14, November 18, December 5 and 9.

Ongoing safety precautions are in place at the hospital for the safety of all.

The Women and Infants Center at St. Elizabeth's Hospital is recognized by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois with a Blue Distinction® Centers (BDC) for Maternity Care designation, as part of the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program.

Meidel said, “The distinction shows that when people choose to deliver at St. Elizabeth’s, they are making the right choice for excellent, compassionate care delivered by our experienced staff. We continue to raise the bar in our facility on behalf of all patients to continue providing quality care.”

For more information on classes and services, visit [www.hshs.org/StElizabeths/Events/Mother-Child](http://www.hshs.org/StElizabeths/Events/Mother-Child) or email [childbirtheduc@hshs.org](mailto:childbirtheduc@hshs.org).

For more information about breastfeeding, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>.

*\*Class dates may change or be cancelled based on COVID-19 activity in the region in order to adhere to state guidance and regulations that may be imposed at the time.*