

# **HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital Shares Benefits Of Breastfeeding**

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O'FALLON, IL. - HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital recognizes National Breastfeeding Month in August, and the benefits of breastfeeding. A mother's milk provides a newborn with vital antibodies and an immunity boost as the infant grows.

"Whether breastfeeding is provided by the breast or by pumping breast milk, it can provide important protection to an infant from many short- and long-term illnesses," said Amanda Schaefer, MSN, RN, manager of the Women and Infants Center at St. Elizabeth's. "It also provides mom and baby with important bonding time."

## Breastfeeding Benefits:

- **Breast milk fights disease.** The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breast milk protect babies from illness such as ear infections, asthma, type 1 diabetes and gastrointestinal infections, among others.
- **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 is liquid gold.** Colostrum, often referred to as 'liquid gold', is the thick yellow breast milk that mothers make during pregnancy and just after birth. This milk is rich in nutrients and antibodies to protect baby. Although 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 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 a baby continue to grow. It is a thinner type of milk than colostrum, but it provides all the nutrients and antibodies a baby needs.
- **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, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about six months, and then continuing breastfeeding while introducing soft foods until a child is 24 months.

## Breastfeeding Support:

For mothers needing additional support to be successful in their breastfeeding journey, HSHS St. Elizabeth's Women and Infants Center offers breastfeeding classes and nurses are available 24/7 to assist you with lactation or other questions. To check for upcoming dates and register for the class, visit [steliz.org](http://steliz.org), and select Classes & Events, or call 618-234-2120, ext. 31925, for more information.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) (CDC) offers additional information about the benefits of breastfeeding.

For mothers who cannot or chose not to breastfeed, the CDC recommends feeding an infant formula that is specifically made for babies and is iron-fortified, which means vitamins and minerals are added. The CDC does not recommend using homemade infant formula; a baby's nutritional needs are very specific and may not be met with the use of a homemade formula recipe.

As always, if you have concerns or questions about breastfeeding or formula feeding, talk with your doctor.