



## Breastfeeding: A Way to Healthy Life

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**Received:** June 24, 2019; **Published:** August 01, 2019

The best nectar for a baby is "its mother's milk". World breastfeeding week is celebrated from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world. Breastfeeding develops a strong emotional bond between the mother and baby.

There are innumerable benefits of breastfeeding to the mother and child. Breastmilk is specially designed by nature to fulfill the nutritional requirement of the infant. The milk at the beginning of the feeding is called the "foremilk" and milk at the end of feeding is called the "hindmilk". The change from foremilk to hindmilk is very gradual. Foremilk is the watery milk and has higher lactose content and less fat than the hindmilk which has higher fat content.

Breastmilk is a complete food for babies for the first six months of life. It is fresh, healthy: loaded with antibodies which provide protection to the baby to fight against various infections. It is at a perfectly right temperature for the baby.

Breastfeeding not only provides health benefits to the baby but is also extremely beneficial to the mother. It releases hormones oxytocin and prolactin which relaxes the mother; her uterus comes to normal size more quickly and also aids in her weight loss. It also helps in birth spacing and prevents her from endocrine and ovarian cancers. Statistics reveals that women who lactate for a total of two or more years reduce their chances of developing breast cancer by 24%.

Apart from cancer, a breastfeeding mother is protected from various other ailments like heart diseases, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes.

Looking at the innumerable advantages of breastfeeding it can be said that, "A Breastfed baby is the best-fed baby" and breastfeeding mother is a "happy and healthy mother".

**Volume 1 Issue 4 September 2019**

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