



The Health Benefits of Breastfeeding

Research Shows Breast Milk is the Best Food for Infants

The undeniable health benefits of breastfeeding infants is why the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Healthy People 2020 Initiative of the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and the World Health Organization all recommend infants be exclusively breastfed for their first six months.

Breastfeeding benefits to babies:

- Research has shown breastfeeding is responsible for a reduction in many childhood illnesses including: acute otitis media (fluid buildup and inflammation of the middle ear); gastrointestinal infections; lower respiratory infections leading to hospitalization, and necrotizing enterocolitis which can destroy the intestinal wall of premature infants.
- Increasing scientific evidence has shown that breastfeeding, especially when infants are breastfed exclusively for more than three months, reduces the risk for obesity. Among low-income children aged two to five in California, obesity rates are higher than the national average: nearly one in five is overweight and an additional one in six is at risk for overweight.
- Breastfeeding helps protect against allergies and eczema.
- Less stomach upset, diarrhea, and constipation occur in breastfed infants versus formula-fed babies.
- Breastfed infants account for only half as many SIDS cases as formula-fed infants do.
- Research shows that breastfed infants have a better antibody response to vaccines than formula-fed infants.
- Breastfeeding has been found to protect against diseases such as spinal meningitis, type 1 diabetes, and Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Breastfeeding benefits to mothers:

- Breastfeeding has been found to lower mothers' risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
- Breastfeeding helps mothers lose pregnancy weight.
- Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of postmenopausal osteoporosis.

Reducing barriers to breastfeeding:

Access to an appropriate, high-quality breast pumps can mean the difference between long-term breastfeeding success and early discontinuation or supplementation with formula.

<https://www.parents.com/baby/breastfeeding/basics/the-benefits-of-breastfeeding/>

By increasing Medi-Cal reimbursement rates to provide quality breast pumps to mothers, California will eliminate a barrier to breastfeeding and help ensure healthier infants and children.