



the benefits of breastfeeding

Did you know?

Many Canadian children are not benefiting from something that is free and available to them!

Something that:

- helps produce healthier, smarter babies
- decreases human suffering by reducing illness
- saves families money
- saves our health care system a lot of money

Sounds too good to be true? It isn't. It's breastfeeding.

It is estimated that less than 10 per cent of Canadian infants are meeting the WHO/UNICEF guidelines for infant feeding. The cost to babies, mothers, families, communities, health care systems and the environment when babies are not breastfed is substantial.

For the baby and growing child, breastfeeding:

- reduces infectious diseases in early and later childhood
- promotes optimal brain development
- provides protection for premature infants against life-threatening illnesses

For the mother, breastfeeding:

- reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer
- decreases the risk of developing osteoporosis
- enables a mother to sustain her infant independently

For the family and community, breastfeeding:

- reduces costs to families
- protects the environment
- improves health and well being of our population
- decreases health care costs (fewer physician and hospital visits)
- requires fewer resources and staff time in hospitals when mothers and babies room-in together
- contributes to long-term health care savings
- improves productivity and reduces absenteeism among breastfeeding mothers as a result of healthier children

Some Breastfeeding Benefits

Breastfeeding reduces the incidence of otitis media (ear aches).

The average cost of treating otitis media per child under the age of two has been estimated to be \$US1040. In Finland the total annual cost for the treatment of otitis media was determined to be \$US138 million in a population of 5 million.

Costs arising from otitis media.

Niemela, M. et al. Acta Paediatrica 88: 553-556, 1999

The real cost of otitis media.

Alsarraf, R. Gates, G. A. Acta Paediatrica 88: 487-488, 1999

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of childhood asthma. In Australia infants breastfed for the first 4 months of life had a risk reduction of childhood asthma of at least 40 per cent.

Association between breast feeding and asthma in 6 year old children: findings of a prospective cohort study

Oddy, W.H. et al. BMJ 319:815-818, 1999

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of gastrointestinal disease. Studies from the republic of Belarus show that infants exclusively breastfeeding at 3 months had a 40 per cent lower risk of developing gastrointestinal infections and a 46 per cent lower risk of developing atopic eczema.

A Randomized trial in the Republic of Belarus

Promotion of Breastfeeding Intervention Trial (PROBIT)

Kramer, M. S. et al. JAMA 285:413-420, 2001

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast cancer for mothers. Studies from the US, the UK, China, Japan, New Zealand and Mexico show that women who had breastfed their children had reduced risk of developing breast cancer and that the risk declines with increased duration of breastfeeding.

Lactation and breast cancer risk.

Furberg, H. et al. Internat J of Epidem 28: 396-402, 1999

United Kingdom National Case-Control Study Group, Breast feeding and risk of breast cancer in young women

BMJ 307: 17-20, 1993

Breastfeeding improves IQ outcomes. In New Zealand increased duration of breastfeeding was associated with statistically significant increases in IQ assessed at the ages of 8 and 9. In the UK infants born prematurely who had received their own mothers milk after birth had an average 8.3 point advantage in IQ scores at ages 7.5 to 8 years of age.

Breastfeeding and later cognitive development and academic outcomes

Horwood, L.J. et al. Pediatrics 101 1998 (www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/101/1e9)

Breastmilk and subsequent intelligent quotient in children born premature

Lucas, A. et al. Lancet 339: 261-264, 1992