

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON BREASTFEEDING AS A CRITICAL STRATEGY FOR OBESITY PREVENTION

The United States Breastfeeding Committee recommends breastfeeding as a primary prevention strategy to reduce overweight and obesity and promote the maintenance of a healthy weight throughout the life span.

Research has identified breastfeeding as a potentially critical strategy in reducing the risk of obesity in adolescence and adult life. All major medical organizations recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, followed by continued breastfeeding for the first year and beyond, with the gradual introduction of appropriate complementary foods to the infant's diet beginning around six months of age.

The incidence of childhood overweight and obesity was lower among infants who were exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. It is well documented that formula fed infants consume larger volumes and gain weight more rapidly than breastfed infants, with the increased weight being predominantly adipose tissue in formula fed infants, while breastfed infants gain proportionately more lean body mass. Research shows rapid weight gain during infancy is associated with childhood obesity. Both formula feeding and non-exclusive breastfeeding may be contributing to the obesity epidemic among American children. Optimal breastfeeding, as recommended by major medical organizations, contributes to normal growth and improved child and adult health outcomes.

<http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=Position-Statements%2fObesity-Statement-Rev-2010-USBC.pdf&tabid=36&mid=378>