

Breastfeeding Topics in the Recent News

Breastfeeding is strongly encouraged in disasters or emergencies

UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the Emergency Nutrition Network, and medical professionals all recommend that breastfeeding and human milk be used for infants in disasters or emergencies. Human milk is life-saving due to its disease prevention properties. It is safe, clean, and does not depend on water which is often unavailable or contaminated in an emergency. Relief workers, health care providers, and other volunteers are urged to provide support for breastfeeding mothers to enable them to continue breastfeeding, and to assist pregnant and postpartum women in initiating and sustaining breastfeeding.

Formula feeding in an emergency is extremely difficult and dangerous. **Even when properly prepared**, infant formula actively and passively harms the immune system of young babies, placing them at risk of life-threatening diarrhea and respiratory illness. [The Emergency Nutrition Network provides information on how formula can cause deaths due to diarrhea in an emergency at:

Infant formula and feeding implements can be contaminated with pathogens

In emergency situations, water supplies are often contaminated with fecal material containing diarrhea-causing pathogens.^[2] Contamination happens in different ways depending on the type of emergency. Earthquakes can rupture sewage pipes resulting in the flow of sewage into water supplies. Storms, tsunamis and flooding similarly can wash human and animal fecal material into water supplies.^[20] Water supply systems can also be damaged by events such as earthquakes and floods resulting in the necessity of obtaining water from poor quality and potentially contaminated sources.^[20] In addition, when large numbers of people are homeless, sanitary services may be makeshift and inadequate which creates an environment where water supplies are easily contaminated. Since the use of infant formula requires water to both make up the formula and to clean feeding implements, formula feeding is often a direct source of infection.

Following Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) the formula feeding rate increased from 27% before the tsunami to 80% after disaster. The occurrence of diarrhea was three times higher among formula fed infants. 73% of infants with diarrhea had been fed from free formula provided.

Breastfeeding Reduces Risk of Breast Cancer in Women Who Have Family History of Breast Cancer.

Women with a family history of breast cancer were 59 percent less likely to develop breast cancer themselves if they breastfed their children.

The reduction in risk was similar whether women breastfed for a lifetime total of three months or for more than three years.

Why breastfeeding reduces risk of breast cancer is unknown. It may be that when women do not breastfeed, inflammation and engorgement shortly after birth causes changes in breast tissue that may increase risk for breast cancer. Breastfeeding followed by weaning may prevent this inflammation.

Breastfeeding a child may lower a woman's risk of developing metabolic syndrome, a condition linked to heart disease and diabetes in women

Breastfeeding a child lowers risk of metabolic syndrome by 39 to 56 percent (depending on the duration of breastfeeding) for women without gestational diabetes, and 44 to 86 percent (depending on the duration of breastfeeding) for women with gestational diabetes, researchers said

Previous research has shown that lactating women have more favorable blood levels of glucose and lipids within several weeks after delivery than women who were not lactating.

The findings indicate that breastfeeding a child may have lasting favorable effects on a woman's risk factors for later developing diabetes or heart disease and that the benefits do not appear to be due to differences in weight gain, physical activity, or other health behaviors.

Breastfeeding lowers a woman's risk of postmenopausal cardiovascular disease

In a recent study, women who reported a lifetime history of breastfeeding for 12 months or more, were less likely to have postmenopausal cardiovascular disease. This study was conducted on 139,681 women who voluntarily participated in The Women's Health Initiative at the University of Pittsburgh. The women ranged in age from 50 to 79 years of age. In this study prolonged lactation of at least 12 months has been shown to improve a woman's glucose level, reduce metabolic disorder, obesity, hypertension and diabetes. This information is significant because the women who were studied had at least 30 years since they last breastfed and the protection was still prevalent. The importance of this information transcends all women regardless of age, parity, socioeconomic background, and education.

Children who were breastfed have decreased cardiovascular disease risk factors in adulthood

The American Heart Association reports in their Scientific Sessions of 2007 that children who are breastfed "are less likely to have certain cardiovascular disease risk factors in adulthood than their formula fed counterparts". It appears that children who are breastfed have lower BMI (Body Mass Index) and a higher amount of the "good cholesterol". This good cholesterol helps protect breastfed children as adults from cardiovascular disease.

Breast milk has three types of stem cells.

New research has discovered the presence of three different types of stem cells in breast milk. Breast milk is the only adult tissue where more than one type of stem cell has been discovered.

Sources:

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