

Understanding the Benefits of Breastmilk

Breastfeeding Benefits

Medela congratulates you on the birth of your baby and supports your healthy decision to breastfeed. To ensure that your breastfeeding experience is a positive one, Medela offers the following guide to help you understand your healthcare insurance benefits as they relate to your important decision to breastfeed.

As you know, breastfeeding offers many advantages. However, your insurance company may not be aware of all of the health benefits associated with breastfeeding for both you and your baby. Here are some breastfeeding benefits:

Why is breastfeeding best?

With the upcoming arrival of your new baby, there are many decisions to be made. None more important than deciding which form of nutrition is best for you and your baby. Numerous government and private industry associations today recognize and promote the importance of exclusively providing breastmilk to babies in the first twelve months of life.

Following are compelling, research-based facts about the importance of breastmilk that may help you to make an informed choice:

Best for Baby:

- Research shows that breastfed infants have fewer and shorter episodes of illness.
- Breastfeeding is the most natural and nutritious way to encourage your baby's optimal development.
- Colostrum (the first milk) is a gentle, natural laxative that helps clear baby's intestine, decreasing the chance for jaundice to occur.
- The superior nutrition provided by breastmilk benefits your baby's IQ.
- Breastfeeding is a gentle way for newborns to transition to the world outside the womb.
- The skin-to-skin contact encouraged by breastfeeding offers babies greater emotional security and enhances bonding.
- The activity of sucking at the breast enhances development of baby's oral muscles, facial bones, and aids in optimal dental development.
- Breastfeeding appears to reduce the risk of obesity and hypertension.
- Breastfeeding delays the onset of hereditary allergic disease, and lowers the risk of developing allergic disease.
- Breastfeeding helps the baby's immune system mature, protecting the baby in the meantime from viral, bacteria, and parasitic infections.
- Breastfeeding increases the effectiveness of immunizations, increasing the protection against polio, tetanus, and diphtheria vaccines.
- Breastfeeding protects against developing chronic diseases such as: celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma, and childhood cancers.

The benefits of breastfeeding appear to last even after the baby has been weaned.

Lack of Breastfeeding Increases the Risk to the Infant of:

- Ear infections

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- Childhood diabetes
- Obesity
- Gastrointestinal and diarrheal infections
- Childhood cancers
- SIDS
- Respiratory infections
- Allergies
- NEC (necrotizing enterocolitis)

Best for Mother:

- Research shows that breastfeeding benefits the health of mothers.
- Breastmilk is always fresh, perfectly clean, just the right temperature, and is the healthy choice at the least cost!
- Increased levels of oxytocin stimulate postpartum uterine contractions, minimizing blood loss and encouraging rapid uterine toning.
- From 3 months to 12 months postpartum, breastfeeding increases the rate of weight loss in most nursing mothers.
- Breastfeeding offers some protection against the early return of fertility.
- Because breastfed babies are healthier, their mothers miss less work and spend less time and money on pediatric care.
- Breastfeeding women report psychological benefits such as increased self-confidence and a stronger sense of connection with their babies.

Lack of Breastfeeding Increases the Risk to the Mother of:

- Urinary tract infection
- Pre-and post-menopausal breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Osteoporosis