



衛生防護中心
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Health Tips

Nearly all mothers could learn the art of breastfeeding and give their babies a healthful start in life.

To ensure an adequate milk supply and continue breastfeeding, lactating mothers should start breastfeeding early, breastfeed their babies exclusively and often, have a balanced diet with enough fluids, and get enough rest.

Breast Milk: Mother's Best Gift to Babies

Following birth, a baby's ability to fight disease is enhanced by living in a healthy environment, immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases and breastfeeding. Other than being the best source and most complete form of nutrient for babies, breast milk contains antibodies and living immune cells that support a newborn baby's immature immune system and protect them against some common but deadly bacterial and viral infections.

Recognising that extending the duration of exclusive breastfeeding confers more benefits (such as lower morbidity from gastrointestinal and allergic diseases), the WHO and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recommend babies be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life (i.e. giving breast milk with no other foods or liquids except prescribed medications), and thereafter receive adequate complementary foods in addition to continued breastfeeding until 2 years of age or beyond.^{1, 2} However, less than 40% of babies under 6 months of age are exclusively breastfed globally.³

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Local Situation

The Family Health Service (FHS) of the Department of Health (DH) offers comprehensive range of health promotion and disease prevention services to babies and children up to five years old through 31 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs). Breastfeeding is also actively promoted through the breastfeeding hotline, individual interviews and counseling. To monitor breastfeeding practice, FHS conducts regular breastfeeding surveys in all locally born children attending the 31 MCHCs. In 2008, over 2 500 children were surveyed during the three-week study period. Results showed that 73.9% of children had ever been breastfed (as reported by parents and verified by clinical notes). As shown in Figure 1, the proportion of babies who were continued breastfed beyond 4 months, continued breastfed beyond 6 months and exclusively breastfed for 4-6 months increased more than one-fold, from 15.0%, 10.0% and 5.8% among babies born in 1998 to 30.8%, 23.8% and 12.7% among babies born in 2008 respectively.⁴ However, there is much room for improvement when compared with most of the European and Asian countries having a ever breastfeeding rate of over 90% and exclusive breastfeeding rate for the first six months of life of 36-43%.

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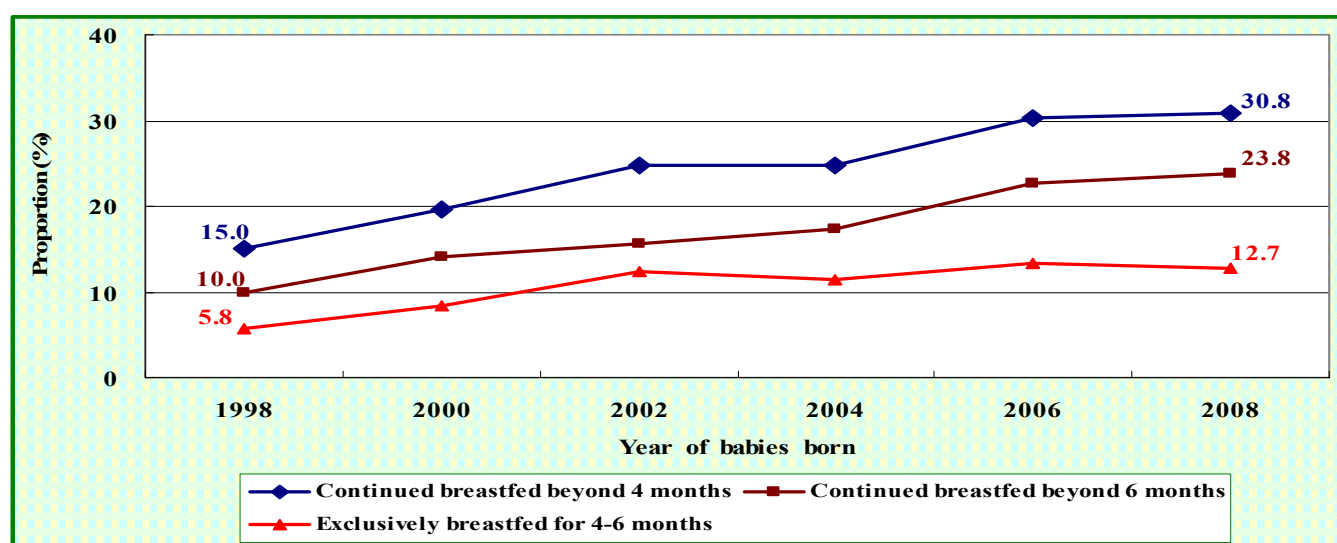
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Figure 1: Proportion of babies who were continued breastfed beyond 4 months, continued breastfed beyond 6 months, and exclusively breastfed for 4-6 months, 1998-2008



Source: Family Health Service, Department of Health.

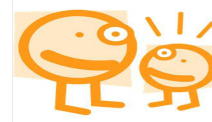
Health Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is one of the best things that only mothers can do for their babies. In fact, breastfeeding is an important health choice that will confer great health benefits on both babies and mothers.

For Babies

Breastfeeding is associated with a significant reduction in the risk of a number of common childhood diseases. Meta-analyses showed that exclusively breastfed babies (either for more than 3 or 6 months duration) had a 50% reduction in the risk of acute otitis media than their exclusively formula-fed counterparts. For babies who were exclusively breastfed for 4 or more months, there was an overall 72% reduction in the risk of hospitalization due to lower respiratory tract diseases when compared with those who were formula-fed. Children who had a family history of atopy and exclusively been breastfed for at least 3 months would also have a 42% reduced risk of atopic dermatitis when compared with those who

were breastfed for less than 3 months⁵. Compared with those who were not breastfed, infants who were breastfed would have a 64% reduction in the risk of non-specific gastroenteritis. Besides, breastfeeding for at least 3 months was also associated with a 27% reduction in the risk of asthma among those subjects without a family of asthma compared with those who were not breastfed. A history of breastfeeding is associated with a 36% reduction in the risk of sudden infant death syndrome compared to those without a history of breastfeeding. Studies have also implicated breastfeeding in reducing risk of childhood leukemia and necrotizing enterocolitis⁶. Furthermore, breastfeeding may confer other long-term benefits. Compared to the non-breastfed babies, breastfed babies would experience higher performance in intelligence tests, but lower prevalence of overweight and obesity, lower prevalence of type 2 diabetes, as well as lower mean blood pressure and lower total cholesterol in later life.^{5,6}



For Mothers

Maternal benefits of breastfeeding include more than rapid uterine involution (due to the release of a hormone named oxytocin in response to the baby's sucking) and reduced risk of post-partum blood loss. Lactation induces a period of infertility that helps to increase birth spacing. Breastfeeding can protect the mothers against certain cancers too. A collaborative reanalysis of 46 studies found that the relative risk of breast cancer was reduced by 4.3% for each year that a woman breastfed.⁷ Compared to those who never breastfed a baby, women who had a history of lactation would have a 21% reduction in the risk of ovarian cancer. Furthermore, studies have implicated breastfeeding in reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes. In contrast, early cessation of breastfeeding or not breastfeeding is associated with an increased risk of maternal postpartum depression.⁵ Depending on how much the baby is taking, breastfeeding may consume up to 500 calories per day so that it possibly accelerates weight loss and helps cut down maternal body weight to pre-pregnant figures faster. In addition, continuous breastfeeding promotes mother-infant bonding and contributes to psychological health of both.

Make Breastfeeding a Wonderful Experience

Unless there are contraindications that warrant the mother to not begin, interrupt or stop breastfeeding (such as the baby is diagnosed with galactosaemia which is a rare genetic metabolic disorder; the mother has active tuberculosis or has been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus, is taking prescribed cancer chemotherapy agents or immunosuppressive medications), all mothers could learn the art of breastfeeding and give their babies a healthful start in life.

To ensure an adequate milk supply and continue breastfeeding, lactating mothers should start breastfeeding early, breastfeed their babies exclusively and often, have a balanced diet with enough fluids, and get enough rest. Of note, returning to work after having a baby does not mean that working mothers have to stop breastfeeding. With adequate preparation and appropriate arrangement before and when returning to work, working mothers can continue breastfeeding their babies (Box 1).

Box 1: Breastfeeding tips for working mothers

Before returning to work

- ※ Establish breastfeeding and maintain good supply of breast milk
- ※ Learn how to express breast milk by hand or breast pump
- ※ Set up a 'milk bank' at home
- ※ Have a refrigerator with freezer compartment
- ※ Prepare clean milk bottles, or use special breast milk freezer bags for storage

When returning to work

- ※ Feed baby well before leaving home in the morning
- ※ Express breast milk during lunch and tea breaks while at work
- ※ Nurse the baby as soon as returning home from work
- ※ Allow enough time to give night feeds before going to bed
- ※ Give unrestricted, demand feeds during weekends and off days

For any doubt or trouble encountered in breastfeeding, ask for help right away. Professional help and advice can be obtained from a nearby MCHC or the FHS **Breastfeeding Hotline** at **2961 8868**. For more information about breastfeeding, child health and maternal health, please visit the website of FHS at <http://www.fhs.gov.hk>.

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Hong Kong Breastfeeding Action Day

(11:30am, Saturday 31 July 2010)

This year, Department of Health, Hospital Authority, Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association and Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF will co-organize and sponsor the Hong Kong Breastfeeding Action Day to celebrate the World Breastfeeding Week. Our target is to have as many mothers as possible breastfeed together at 11:30am, Saturday 31 July 2010.

The function will be held all over Hong Kong at the following venues:

- ◆ Quarry Bay Community Hall - each mother and baby can be accompanied by one family member. Opening ceremony at 11am with group photo at 11:30am followed by the World Breastfeeding Week press conference when the total number of mothers participating at the various venues will be announced.
- ◆ Hospitals - Obstetric and Paediatric Units of the Hospital Authority and participating maternity units in private hospitals
- ◆ Maternal and Child Health Centres of Department of Health at Lek Yuen and West Kowloon
- ◆ At home or workplace

Mothers can enroll on or before 24 July 2010 through medical staff (only available at Hospital Authority hospitals maternity or paediatric units, MCHCs, and private hospital maternity units). For on-line enrollment, please visit the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association's website at <http://www.babyfriendly.org.hk>. Let's breastfeed together and break the Hong Kong record!

World Breastfeeding Week



Since 1992, World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) has been celebrated every 1-7 August as to generate public awareness and support for breastfeeding.

Health care facilities play a vital role in the establishment of breastfeeding. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Innocenti Declaration that called for implementation of the Ten Steps in all maternity facilities, the theme for World Breastfeeding Week 2010 is '*Breastfeeding - Just 10 Steps! The Baby-Friendly Way*'.

Specifically, the objectives of such an initiative include:

- ◆ To increase attention to the contribution of the Ten Steps to exclusive breastfeeding;
- ◆ To revitalise activities within health systems, and among healthcare providers and communities to support women to achieve their breastfeeding intentions;
- ◆ To inform people everywhere that protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is a mother's right, a child's right, and a human right;
- ◆ To enable women and all who care about human rights to fight for health care systems which support breastfeeding;
- ◆ To ensure that health workers who care for mothers and babies are adequately trained to counsel and support them in optimal infant feeding.

For more information about the World Breastfeeding Week 2010 or past WBW, please visit its designated website at <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org>.

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Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) WATCH is dedicated to promote public's awareness of and disseminate health information about non-communicable diseases and related issues, and the importance of their prevention and control. It is also an indication of our commitments in responsive risk communication and to address the growing non-communicable disease threats to the health of our community.

The Editorial Board welcomes your views and comments. Please send all comments and/or questions to so_dp3@dh.gov.hk.