



Risks of not Breastfeeding

For Infants

It may not seem like offering your baby a bottle of infant formula has any consequences. However, it does. And there are some drawbacks to just one bottle, and consequences with many feedings of infant formula.

Before you make a decision, consider these things.

Ask your nurse, health care provider, or lactation consultant for more details if you have questions.

Increased risk of:

- Infections (lung and GI tract)
- Childhood obesity
- Type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- Childhood cancer
- Sudden infant death syndrome
- Otitis media (ear infections)
- Lower respiratory tract infections
- Asthma
- Atopic dermatitis (skin allergies)
- Heart disease and high blood pressure
- Diarrhea
- Necrotizing Enterocolitis in premature infants
- Colic and stomach upset
- Changes the digestive bacteria in your baby's GI tract
- Dental malocclusion

If you are breastfeeding, offering a bottle can:

- Reduce your breastmilk supply
- Change your baby's suck at the breast
- Reduce your baby's desire to breastfeed

In addition, there is the risk of possible contaminated formula or improper preparation of ingredients. There have been several recalls by formula manufacturers in recent years.

For Mothers

It may be surprising that there are risks of not breastfeeding. The longer the mother breastfeeds, the lower the risks.

Increased risk of:

- Premenopausal breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Obesity
- Retained pregnancy weight gain
- Type 2 diabetes
- Myocardial infarction (heart attack)
- Metabolic syndrome
- Osteoporosis
- Rheumatoid arthritis

If infants were breastfed optimally (6 months exclusively, continuing for a year or more), it would save 3,340 lives from only 3 diagnoses (breast cancer, hypertension, and MI) annually.

Bartick M. Suboptimal Breastfeeding in the United States: Maternal and pediatric health outcomes and costs. Maternal and Child Nutrition 2017.

If infants were breastfed optimally (6 months exclusively, continuing for a year or more), it would save 721 infant lives and \$14 billion annually.

Bartick M. Suboptimal Breastfeeding in the United States: Maternal and pediatric health outcomes and costs. Maternal and Child Nutrition 2017.

The Centers for Disease Control, The American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, and other professional groups involved in infant health all recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, and then continuing for 1-2 years with the gradual introduction of solid foods.