

World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is held every year from the 1st to the 7th of August. The week highlights the many health benefits of breastfeeding for babies as well as raises awareness of maternal health issues, emphasising good nutrition, poverty reduction and food security.

The annual event is organised by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in various parts of the world.



The World Breastfeeding Week 2022 theme

World Breastfeeding Week will focus on strengthening the capacity of individuals that have to protect, promote and support breastfeeding across different levels of society.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, and the Department of Health (DOH) recommend exclusively breastfeeding for the first 6 months of the baby's life. They also encourage mothers to carry on breastfeeding while introducing complimentary food until the end of the baby's first year and beyond that if they wish.



Benefits of breastfeeding for the baby

A baby's first food is breast milk. Unlike formula, it is a complete food that contains at least 400 nutrients, hormones and disease-fighting compounds, and it adjusts to the baby's growth as the child grows.

- Breast milk supports an infant's growth and development, and it changes as the baby grows in order to meet their nutritional needs.
- Breast milk can protect babies against short and long-term illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, ear infection and obesity.
- Mothers transfer antibodies to their infants through breast milk, which help in boosting their immunity and protecting them from diseases.
- Studies shows that breastfed babies have a higher IQ score.
- Breast milk also reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Benefits of breastfeeding for the mother

- Lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer
- Lower risk of rheumatoid arthritis and lupus
- Less osteoporosis with age
- Reduces the chance of developing diabetes
- Reduces the risk of hypertension and decreases blood pressure
- Lowers the risk of developing cardiovascular disease
- Promotes faster weight loss after birth, burning about 500 extra calories a day to build and maintain milk supply
- Reduces the risk of uterine bleeding and helps the uterus to return to the normal size

Facts about breastfeeding

- During the first days of birth, the breast produces milk that is called colostrum and it is specially produced in small amounts to help your baby's immune system
- The milk production will begin to increase within 3-4 days of giving birth
- Research shows a connecting link between breastfeeding and weight control later
- Breast size is not an issue when breastfeeding, your body will produce the right amount required for your baby
- Breastfeeding introduces your baby to many new tastes and smells



Helpful hints for breastfeeding mothers

- Be sure to select a baby-friendly hospital that supports breastfeeding and keeps you in the same room with your baby
- Breastfeed within 30-60 minutes after birth then frequently 8 to 12 times in 24 hours
- Skin-to-skin contact with your baby will enhance milk-producing hormones
- Relax and be patient, infants typically breastfeed between 10-20 minutes
- Do not give a bottle or a pacifier till breastfeeding is well established
- Pumped milk can be stored in the fridge for up to three days and in the freezer for up to six months
- Consult your doctor/lactation consultant if you have unusually red, swollen and hard breasts, any abnormal discharge from the nipple or if your baby is not gaining weight.

