

Eyes on

Breastfeeding:

More than loving contact



ABORIGINAL PARENTS



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development



“It is very important in the traditional teachings to breastfeed the baby. You have the natural bonding immediately... I would advise the young women to connect with their elders and to get some teachings on how to parent and how to look after their babies.”

Margaret Lavalee

Excerpted from: *So you want a healthy baby*, a booklet written by Patricia Martens, Fort Alexander Health Centre, Pine Falls, Manitoba, 1996.



What do we know?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that babies be nourished through breastfeeding only, with no other liquids or foods, during the first six months of life.
- The WHO also recommends that mothers continue to breastfeed their children while also giving them other appropriate foods, until the age of two, if both mother and child are comfortable with it.
- Many studies have confirmed the benefits of breastfeeding for the child’s nutrition, growth and development, as well as for the mother’s health.
- Mother’s milk contains substances that nourish and protect your baby from infections.
- Mother’s milk also contains fatty acids that are essential to the development of your baby’s brain and nervous system.
- Breastfeeding promotes your young child’s intellectual development.
- Breastfeeding makes your baby more resistant to infections such as diarrhea, otitis (ear infections) and pneumonia.
- In suckling, your baby learns to control his appetite as he stops drinking when he is no longer hungry. This learning helps prevent him from gaining excess weight.
- The warm contact provided by breastfeeding strengthens the relationship of emotional security between you and your child.
- Researchers have observed that breastfeeding mothers have more self-confidence, less stress, and fewer bad moods.

Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... the fact that breastfeeding is natural, but may need to be learned.

- Start to become informed, from the beginning of the pregnancy, if breastfeeding support services are offered in your community, such as support groups or breastfeeding peer counsellors.
- Encourage persons close to you to become well informed about breastfeeding.

... the fact that certain actions make breastfeeding easier during the first few days after birth.

- Start breastfeeding as soon as possible after childbirth.
- Room in with your baby right from birth to help recognize your baby's hunger signals and make breastfeeding easier.

... the fact that breastfeeding is easier when the mother is supported and encouraged by those around her.

- Identify people (for example Elders) who have a positive approach to breastfeeding and call on them as needed for support and encouragement.
- Ask for and accept help from those around you.
- Attend, if available, information meetings on breastfeeding with other parents for discussion and reassurance.

“A community and nation that takes the responsibilities of breastfeeding seriously, that honours and respects the needs of the birthing women to have the time and support they need in order that breastfeeding is established, is a nation that cares about the long term health of its people.” (written by Carol Couchie)

Excerpted from: *NONASOWIN*, Union of Ontario Indians, 1995.





Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of breastfeeding, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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