

Feeding your Baby - fine and good enough!

In life, do we always do what is optimal, ideal or best?

For example, do we always eat the best food, make the best meals, wear the best clothes, drive the best car, and live in the best house?

No, we don't. Most of us are happy with standard or good enough options. We don't need the best of everything.

When it comes to feeding our baby, if 'breast is best', then it's still okay to formula feed your baby because it's adequate. **Not the best, but just fine and good enough.**

This is not the big debate between breastmilk and formula, so if you're looking for my opinion, you're not going to find it here. Like all the knowledge and experience I share, it's just that, unbiased, giving you the information, facts, tools and references to make your own decision. It's your right to choose how to feed your baby and you can change your mind along the way if you want.

One of the most disheartening things for me as both a mother and birth educator is seeing how judgmental and unsupportive some people are towards other others.

There's always someone right there to judge or attack you for each and every little (or big) choice you make, when most mothers are simply craving and yearning for connection, nurturing, love and validation. I see many mothers not being able to relax into their soft, feminine, nurturing role of a goddess mamma... instead, they become hardened, in their masculine and on the ready and defensive!

Some people can be uncomfortable around women while they are breastfeeding. However, if you pull out a bottle of formula, there are those who may criticise you for not feeding your baby what they might consider "nature's perfect food" - breast milk.

Welcome to Mummy Guilt! No matter what you decide, other people will surely have an opinion. Only one thing really matters: Which choice is right for you and your baby?

Finding the best way to feed your baby can sometimes be difficult or stressful and some families change the way they feed their baby because they've had problems or lost confidence.

Let's start by comparing breast milk to formula. There are ways in which formula is similar to breast milk: they both provide energy, hydration and nutrients, so your baby will grow whichever milk they are given. When deciding how to feed your baby, knowing what's in breast milk or formula, the difference in cost, and the impact they have on health and sleep, may help you make an informed choice.

Human milk has evolved over millions of years to be the ideal food for human babies. It's much more complex than other mammals' milk, as it builds our more complex brains and unique digestive and immune systems.

In contrast, cow's milk, from which most formula is made, meets the specific needs of calves. It's not safe for human babies to drink, so has to be processed intensively when made into formula for infants.



One of the benefits of breast milk over formula is that it's a living fluid. It adapts to your baby's changing circumstances. So if your baby becomes ill, your body makes extra white blood cells and antibodies that travel into your milk and help fight infection.

Breastmilk

- It contains the proper proportion of nutrients that your baby needs, including protein, carbohydrates, fat, and calcium
- It provides natural antibodies that help your baby resist illnesses and many infections
- It's usually more easily digested than formula. So breastfed babies are often less constipated and gassy
- It may lower the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in the first year of your baby's life
- Breast milk may even help your child in later years, by reducing the risk of being overweight, and of developing asthma, allergies, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, Hodgkin's disease, leukemia, and lymphoma
- Helps promote bonding and attachment
- It's always available and it's free
- Breast milk can also be pumped and stored

Formula Feeding

Formula feeding is also a healthy choice for babies. If you use a formula, your baby will get the best possible alternative to breast milk. (You should not attempt to make your own formula or feed an infant cow's milk or another kind of milk.)

- It's convenient. Formula-fed babies can be fed by anyone at any time
- It's flexible. You don't have to fit pumping into your work schedule. Instead, you can simply leave formula for your babysitter or daycare centre
- Your partner can help out with nighttime feedings and share that bonding experience
- Scheduling feedings may be easier. Formula isn't digested as quickly as breast milk, so formula-fed babies don't need to eat as often, especially in the first few months
- You don't have to worry about what you eat
- You can have a glass of wine once in a while

The Importance of Respectfully Sharing Information

Sharing and posting breastfeeding and formula feeding information needs to be done respectfully. It's important that people have access to accurate and up-to-date information, but we needn't be insensitive.

Putting Risk Into Perspective Helps In Receiving Information

Remember that scientific research doesn't speak in absolutes. It speaks in terms of risks.

For example, if a study comes out that indicates that formula fed babies are more likely to be hospitalised due to gastroenteritis, this does not mean that this will happen to your baby if he is formula fed. It just means that when looking at large groups of babies, those who are formula fed are more likely to be hospitalised due to gastroenteritis.

So next time you read something on the internet, remember that you and your baby are individuals. What works for one family doesn't necessarily work for another.

Finally, it's important to remember that being a mother is so much more than about how your baby is fed. There is absolutely no connection between being a 'good' mother and how you feed your baby,

