



Breastfeeding an Older Baby

Breastfeeding is not just for newborn babies. Many babies and mothers continue to breastfeed happily for months and even years. The word nursing is often used to show it is more than providing just food at the breast.

Are their benefits to nursing an older baby?

Yes, there are benefits.

- ◆ The baby continues to get good nutrition. For example, breast milk can provide half of the baby's needs for energy and protein at 12 months old.
- ◆ The protection from illness continues for as long as breastfeeding continues.
- ◆ A mother and her baby can enjoy a time of peace and togetherness while nursing. This can be a special time if mother and baby are separated during the day.
- ◆ A wakeful baby at night can easily be soothed by nursing rather than walking and rocking.
- ◆ The baby's close bond with the mother helps the baby to develop trust and to relate to other people.
- ◆ The mother benefits too by using up weight gained during pregnancy as well as reducing her risk of some illnesses.



Are there difficulties to nursing an older baby?

Yes, there can be difficulties. If other people think breastfeeding is unusual, they may make comments. What can you say if people make comments?

If someone says: "Are you *still* feeding that baby?", you could reply "Yes, doesn't the baby look well?"

Or if they say: "When are you going to stop doing *that*?", you could reply, "We should be finished in a few minutes, was there something you wanted us to do?"

If the other person is a close family member or friend, you might explain how good breastfeeding is for you and the baby. If the person is not close to you, why is it any of their business?

What can help?

Look for people who think breastfeeding is a good idea. Go to a mother support group and meet other mothers nursing older babies. Breastfeeding counsellors will talk to you on the phone and by email also.

If you know someone will make difficult comments, go somewhere private to 'tend to the baby' without saying that you are nursing.

Remember that your baby knows that you are doing your best.

If breastfeeding a child that is one year or two years old seems unusual, think about how often we see a two-year old or even a three-year old with a bottle or a soother. Do we think that is unusual?