



# LACTATION INSIGHTS

**WELCOME** to the Summer, 2007 edition of Lactation Insights! This newsletter is written and published quarterly by Janet to support breastfeeding mothers and their families.

## **BREASTFEEDING: THE 1<sup>ST</sup> HOUR**

World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated each year from August 1-7. The theme this year is: “Early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for six months can SAVE more than one million babies worldwide!”

The first hour of life for a newborn is a remarkable one. When healthy infants are placed skin-to-skin on their mother’s abdomen and chest immediately after birth, they are alert, they can crawl across the mother’s abdomen and they can reach for and touch their mother’s breast. This action releases maternal oxytocin which initiates the flow of milk and enhances the feelings of love for the baby. After several minutes on her chest, the baby smells, mouths and licks the mother’s nipple, and finally attaches to the breast. What an awesome sequence of events!

For the first time, researchers have assessed the effect of the timing of the first breastfeed on newborn mortality—showing that mortality may be less if infants start to breastfeed in the first hour after birth.

Researchers in rural Ghana, where early breastfeeding was not the norm, found that babies who started to breastfeed in the first hour of life were more likely to survive the neonatal period than those who did not (Edmond et al, 2006). Babies who did not start breastfeeding until after 24 hours of age were 2.5 times more likely to die than babies who started within the first hour of

life, whether they were partially or exclusively breastfed. The researchers concluded that in rural Ghana, 16% of newborn deaths could be prevented if newborns were exclusively breastfed from day one. They also found that 22% of newborn deaths could be prevented if newborns initiated breastfeeding within one hour of birth.

## **Skin-to-skin contact after birth and breastfeeding within the first hour of life are important for many reasons:**

1. The mother’s body helps to keep the baby appropriately warm.
2. The baby is less stressed, calmer (less likely to cry) and has steadier breathing and heart rates.
3. The baby is exposed first to the bacteria from the mother (which are mostly harmless). The mother’s beneficial bacteria help to colonize the baby’s gut and skin.
4. The baby receives colostrum for the first feeds—sometimes called the gift of life. Colostrum contains growth factors, which help the infant’s intestine to mature and function effectively. This makes it more difficult for micro-organisms and allergens to get into the baby’s body. Colostrum is also rich in vitamin A to help protect the infant’s eyes and reduce infection.
5. Early breastfeeding releases oxytocin, causing the uterus to contract and helping to deliver the placenta.
6. Women experience incredible joy with their first encounter of their new baby! And fathers often share

this delight. The process of bonding between mother and baby begins!

Overall, skin-to-skin contact and early feeds with colostrum are associated with reduced mortality in the first month of life. They are also associated with increased exclusive breastfeeding and longer duration of breastfeeding in the following months, leading to improved health and reduced mortality later on.

### **FISH OIL SPEEDS MATURING OF INFANTS' IMMUNE SYSTEMS**

Danish researchers recruited 122 nursing mothers whose fish oil intake fell below the population average. (Since most people in Denmark eat lots of fish, these women's fish intake probably approximated the American average, which is low in comparison to Denmark and other Nordic countries.)

The researchers randomized the mothers into two groups: one group was given capsules containing fish oil (1.5 grams of omega-3s) while the other group took capsules containing olive oil (Lauritzen L et al 2005). All of the mothers took the capsules throughout the first 4 months of nursing.

Blood was taken from all of the nursing infants at 4 months and 2.45 years of age for testing. At 2.45 years of age, blood levels of the immunity marker IFN-gamma were four times higher in the children of mothers who took fish oil, compared with the offspring of mothers given olive oil capsules.

Omega-3s are essential for optimal brain growth and occur in breastmilk proportionally to the amount in the nursing mother's diet. For additional information on why Omega-3s are important for

nursing mothers and their babies, please see my article on this subject at: [lactinv.com/omega-3s.htm](http://lactinv.com/omega-3s.htm) To purchase Carlson's Fish Oil supplements, give me a call.

### **CHILDREN'S MULTIPLE VITAMINS**

Vitamins and minerals are nutrients that all of us are familiar with. But do our children really need a vitamin supplement? That depends upon your child's overall health, hemoglobin level, and willingness to eat a well-balanced diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables. Recently I did some research on chewable vitamins offered for children. I was surprised to find that several major brands of children's vitamins contained artificial coloring and flavoring. In addition, Flintstones and Centrum Jr. vitamins used Aspartame (a neurotoxin) as a sweetener! The children's vitamins contained ingredients that I couldn't pronounce or spell.

Recently I began carrying Nature's Sunshine nutritional supplements. I am impressed with their purity and ease of digestion. All of Nature's Sunshine vitamins are chelated, making them easy for the body to assimilate. Nature's Sunshine vitamins contain nutrients that are pure and come from nature, not from a chemical source. When there is a need for additional iron in a child's diet, the iron in the children's vitamin is gentle and easily absorbed. The children's vitamins from Nature's Sunshine come in a liquid form and a delicious, naturally flavored tablet. Call me if you would like more information about Prenatal, or Children's vitamins from Nature's Sunshine.

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