

LACTATION INSIGHTS



WELCOME to the Winter, 2003 edition of Lactation Insights! This newsletter is published quarterly and is written by Janet to support breastfeeding mothers and their families.

BREASTFEEDING AND CANCER

As the amount of evidence grows in support of breastfeeding's benefits for infants, you can also chalk one up for mom: The more children a woman has and the longer she nurses them can significantly influence whether she develops breast cancer.

Oxford University scientists pooled data from nearly 50 studies, representing tens of thousands of women worldwide. The study results (which were published in *The Lancet*) showed that the risk of breast cancer was reduced by 4.3% for every year a woman breastfed.

The risk also dropped an additional 7% for every child born.

Results did not vary significantly when researchers considered characteristics such as a woman's age, menopausal status or ethnicity.

In recent decades, breast cancer rates have risen as childbearing patterns have changed. Today, women living in industrialized nations are likely to have only 2 or 3 children and breastfeed them for only a few months, compared with the larger families that were more common a century ago, when women routinely nursed their infants for 2 years or more.

Oxford scientists directly linked the short duration of breastfeeding typical of women in developed nations like the United States with the high incidence of breast cancer in these countries.

Experts speculate that breastfeeding reduces breast cancer by limiting the number of menstrual cycles a woman has. Fewer cycles means less exposure to estrogen. They conclude that breastfeeding has its benefits for both mother and baby!

WHY DO BABIES CRY SO MUCH?

One of the reasons why babies in western cultures tend to cry so much is that we inadvertently **teach** them to cry for what they need. We often wait until they cry before we feed them. We pick them up when they are crying and we put them down (away from us) when they are "good". We make them sleep in their own beds, away from us. We put them in car seats and leave them there for many hours. In my opinion, car seats should only be used in the car. Babies should be held in loving arms or in a sling when they are awake.

Parents can eliminate a LOT of crying and colicky behavior by carrying their babies in a sling. Dr. William Sears has studied "babywearing" extensively and endorses this practice with his young patients. On his website, Dr. Sears writes, "Anthropologists who travel throughout the world studying infant-care practices in other cultures agree that infants in babywearing cultures cry much less. In Western culture we measure a baby's crying in hours, but in other cultures, crying is measured in minutes. We have

been led to believe that it is "normal" for babies to cry a lot, but in other cultures this is not accepted as the norm. In these cultures, babies are normally "up" in arms and are put down only to sleep – next to the mother.”

Dr. Sears goes on to say that babies carried in slings **learn more**. “If infants spend less time crying and fussing, what do they do with the free time? They learn! Sling babies spend more time in the state of quiet alertness. This is the behavioral state in which an infant is most content and best able to interact with his environment. It may be called the optimal state of learning for a baby. Researchers have also reported that carried babies show enhanced visual and auditory alertness.”

Best of all, the baby carried in a sling can easily be arranged so they can breastfeed while being worn by the mother which makes breastfeeding so convenient!

BREASTFEEDING IS HEART HEALTHY!

Compelling evidence suggests that human milk provides one of the keys to future heart health for the breastfed infant. Better cholesterol, less risk for insulin-dependent diabetes, and lower weight and blood pressure are among the lifelong possibilities for infants lucky enough to be breastfed by their mothers.

According to a September, 2002 study that was published in *Pediatrics*, breastfed babies have a higher total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol. The higher cholesterol levels may be part of a “nutritional programming” which occurs during infancy, resulting in reduced cholesterol levels in adulthood.

Extensive research also suggests that breastfeeding helps prevent insulin-

dependent diabetes which is another risk factor in developing heart disease. Those infants who were exclusively breastfed during the first 3 months of life had a 34% lower risk of developing insulin-dependent diabetes later in life. Breastmilk consumption was also associated with lower blood pressure later in life of children who were born prematurely.

Breastfeeding is one of the most loving and long-lasting gifts a mother can give to her infant!

I LOVE MUSTARD!

If you have children who are breastfed, you can relate to this father!!

As ham sandwiches go, it was perfection. A thick slab of ham, a fresh bun, crisp lettuce and plenty of expensive, yellow gourmet mustard. The corners of my jaw aching in anticipation, I carried it to the table in our backyard, picked it up with both hands, but was stopped by my wife suddenly at my side. “Hold Johnny (our six-week old son) while I get my sandwich,” she said. I had him balanced between my left elbow and my shoulder and was reaching again for the ham sandwich when I noticed a streak of mustard on my fingers. I love mustard. I had no napkin. I licked it off.

It was not mustard! No man ever put a baby down faster. It was the first and only time I have sprinted with my tongue protruding. With a washcloth in each hand, I did the sort of routine shoeshine boys do, only I did it on my tongue. Later (after she stopped crying from laughing so hard) my wife said, “Now you know why they call that mustard ‘Poupon’.”

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