

## **From Your Breast-feeding Bestie: Can I just pump?**

It's 2am and you're in your milk-stained pajamas trying to position your screaming two-week-old to get them to latch. That high-pitched scream is echoing through the house. You pray they don't wake your sleeping toddler down the hall. You think "why am I even trying to get them to latch, can't I just pump?"

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends, "exclusively breastfeeding for about 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding with complementary foods for at least 2 years and beyond as mutually desired." What does it mean to exclusively breastfeed?

Exclusively breastfeeding means that a baby gets all their nutrition from breast milk only. It does not matter whether the baby nurses directly at the breast or drinks pumped breastmilk from a bottle—both still count as exclusive breastfeeding. And all those benefits of breastfeeding you hear about for mom and baby? Those happen whether your baby gets some or all of their nutrition from breastmilk, and whether or not they get their breastmilk from a bottle or directly from the breast.

Let's review those benefits: Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancers including breast, ovarian, endometrial and thyroid cancers. Infant benefits of breastmilk include lower risk of infections including ear infections and lower respiratory tract infections. There is also lower risk of diagnoses such as asthma, eczema, and inflammatory bowel disease. So, if your baby receives breastmilk in any form for any amount of time, pat yourself on the back because that is a job well done.

Are there reasons to push through the cracked, bleeding nipples, silverette nipple covers, and cold cabbage leaves to continue directly breastfeeding? Yes! One of the greatest benefits is the social-emotional bonding between the mother and baby. Direct breastfeeding helps a mother and baby develop a shared sleep-wake cycle, also known as a circadian rhythm. It also increases oxytocin, which is the hormone for bonding or connection. In addition, direct breastfeeding provides more immune benefits than pumped milk. When a baby is sick and nurses at the breast, the mother's body recognizes the germs and makes special antibodies to help the baby fight the illness. It's like becoming your baby's very own superhero partner in fighting off infections. Another benefit (that is hard to believe in the beginning stages of breastfeeding) is that directly breastfeeding is more convenient. By putting the baby to breast you have fewer pump parts and bottles to wash.

As a survivor of the triple feeding trenches (put baby to breast, then pump, then give the pumped milk to baby... and repeat), I know how challenging breast feeding can be in those first few weeks. Think about your feeding goals and talk to your pediatrician about how they can support you to achieve them. Keep going momma!

*Dr. Christa Mattingly is a third-year pediatric resident, lactation-consultant-in-training, and proud momma to one very sweet, very spunky baby girl.*

### **Parent Resources:**

Looking for a lactation consultant: <https://lactationnetwork.com/>

Need lactation peer support: <https://lila.org/get-support/>

Interested in learning more about milk storage guideline:

<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breast-milk-preparation-and-storage/handling-breast-milk.html>

### **Resources:**

<https://www.bfmed.org/assets/ABM%20protocol%2035%20Nov%202021.pdf>

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057988/188347/Policy-Statement-Breastfeeding-and-the-Use-of?autologincheck=redirected>