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*Photo Source: United States Breastfeeding Committee

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IMPORTANCE OF NURSING BEYOND THE FIRST YEAR

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING



Breastfeeding and breastmilk continue to benefit parents and their children for longer than we once thought. This is why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children continue to be nursed or receive breastmilk for at least 2 years.

Things breastmilk provides toddlers

Nutrition

Breastmilk continues to nourish the child during the second, and later years of life. It contains protein, fat, and other nutrients which children need.

Comfort

Breastfeeding can provide a great deal of comfort for the toddler—just as it did during the first year. Many parents find nursing helpful, to both parent and child, during stressful times.



Protection from illness

Children get immunities from breastmilk. Studies have even found health protection in greater amounts during the second year and beyond.

Bonding

Many find nursing to be a way of keeping that special closeness with their children after going back to work or school.

Information about breastfeeding into the toddler years

- Many parents who have nursed a child past 12 months only nurse once or twice a day. Often, this is at bedtime or first thing in the morning.
- Toddlers may nurse for comfort when they are sick or hurt. The closeness is a great way to help them feel better.
- Older babies and toddlers may nurse in unusual positions. This is fine.
- WIC encourages parents to breastfeed past 1 year and to keep it up until at least 2 years. WIC can answer questions you might have and will be here to support your breastfeeding journey for as long as you and your child desire.

Responding to others

If others comment about your choice to nurse past the first year, focus on the fact that you are simply feeding your child milk. This may be the first time the other person has seen an older child nursing. If open to hearing more, let them know that your milk, even at this stage, gives your child great nutrition, as well as health protection for both you and your child that store-bought milk cannot provide. Let them know that this is what the doctor told you to do. You might be the first person to teach them about longer term breastfeeding. In doing so, you are making it easier for other breastfeeding parents they meet.

Deciding how long to breastfeed

The norm

Parents around the world often nurse each of their children more than 1 year, and many nurse 2 or more years. Children let their parents know when they are ready to move past the breastfeeding stage. Be sure to pat yourself on the back for all the good you have done!

Advice from the experts

The American Academy of Pediatrics, The World Health Organization, and UNICEF all recommend that all infants be fed only breastmilk from birth to 6 months of age, and breastmilk along with family foods until 2 years of age, and longer, when desired by both parent and child.

The decision about how long to nurse is up to your child and you.

