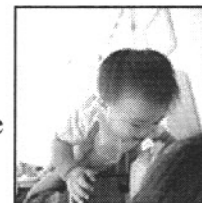




Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How many infants born in the United States are breastfed?

The [CDC National Immunization Survey](#) is a nationally representative sample of the U.S. population, among infants born in 2005:



- 74.2% were ever breastfed
- 43.1% were still breastfeeding at 6 months of age
- 21.4% were breastfeeding at 1 year of age
- 31.5% were exclusively breastfed through 3 months of age
- 11.9% were exclusively breastfed through 6 months of age

For additional breastfeeding statistics, see [Data and Statistics](#).

Are growth charts available to assess growth in breastfed infants?

In May of 2000, CDC released revised Growth Charts for children of all ages. The population studied to determine the desirable rate of growth included many breastfed infants. Although there are no growth charts specific to breastfed children alone, these revised [CDC Growth Charts](#) are recommended for all infants in the United States. The World Health Organization is developing growth charts based on breastfed infants. CDC is currently working with WHO on these new growth charts.

When should a baby start eating solid foods such as cereals, vegetables, and fruits?

Breast milk alone is sufficient to support optimal growth and development for approximately the first 6 months after birth. For these very young infants, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) states that water, juice, and other foods are generally unnecessary. Even when babies enjoy discovering new tastes and textures, solid foods should not replace breastfeeding, but merely complement breast milk as the infant's main source of nutrients throughout the first year. Beyond one year, as the variety and volume of solid foods gradually increase, breast milk remains an ideal addition to the child's diet.

For additional breastfeeding recommendations, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' [Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk](#).*

How long should a mother breastfeed?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that breastfeeding continue for at least 12 months, and thereafter for as long as mother and baby desire. The World Health Organization recommends continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.

What can happen if someone else's breast milk is given to another child?

HIV and other serious infectious diseases can be transmitted through breast milk. However, the risk

of infection from a single bottle of breast milk, even if the mother is HIV positive, is extremely small. For women who do not have HIV or other serious infectious diseases, there is little risk to the child who receives her breast milk. See [Diseases and Conditions](#) for more information.

Are special precautions needed for handling breast milk?

CDC does not list human breast milk as a body fluid for which most healthcare personnel should use special handling precautions. Occupational exposure to human breast milk has not been shown to lead to transmission of HIV or HBV infection. However, because human breast milk has been implicated in transmitting HIV from mother to infant, gloves may be worn as a precaution by health care workers who are frequently exposed to breast milk (e.g., persons working in human milk banks).

For additional information regarding Universal Precautions as they apply to breast milk in the transmission of HIV and Hepatitis B infections, visit the following resources:

- Perspectives in Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Update: Universal Precautions for Prevention of Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Hepatitis B Virus, and Other Bloodborne Pathogens in Health-Care Settings. *MMWR* June 24, 1988, 37(24):377–388.
- CDC. Recommendations for prevention of HIV transmission in health-care settings. *MMWR* 1987, 36 (supplement no. 2S):1–18S.

Should mothers who smoke breastfeed?

Mothers who smoke are encouraged to quit, however, breast milk remains the ideal food for a baby even if the mother smokes. Although nicotine may be present in breast milk, adverse effects on the infant during breastfeeding have not been reported. AAP recognizes pregnancy and lactation as two ideal times to promote smoking cessation, but does not indicate that mothers who smoke should not breastfeed.


Where can I find answers to my other questions about breastfeeding?

To find additional resources on breastfeeding:

- [National Women's Health Information Center](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics' Children's Health Topics: Breastfeeding*](#)

To locate someone who can help you with practical breastfeeding concerns, begin by talking to your pediatrician. In addition, you may wish to contact your State or County Health Department, your local Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinic, or one of the local La Leche League affiliates. To locate a Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), visit [The International Lactation Consultant Association](#).*

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 Please note: Some of these publications are available for download only as *.pdf files. These files require Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to be viewed. Please review the [information on downloading and using Acrobat Reader software](#).

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Page Located on the Web at <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/faq/index.htm>

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