



Supporting the birth that is right for you!

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Why Breastmilk is Better than Cow's Milk

By Rebecca Pugh

To put it simply; breastmilk is best! Breastmilk contains just the right amount of fatty acids, lactose, water and amino acids for human digestion, brain development, and growth. In comparison, cow's milk is the perfect food for baby cow's, not humans. This paper will show how breastmilk is specifically designed to be the ideal food for human babies, while cow's milk formulas are not appropriate nutrition for human babies.

Cow's milk contains more of a different kind of protein that is difficult for humans to digest. Breastmilk contains more whey than curds, a more favorable balance for babies. Despite the fact that cow's milk formulas contain more protein than breastmilk, the protein they carry is less easily assimilated.

Breastmilk carries anti-bodies to disease that are not present in cow's milk. 80% of the cells in breastmilk are macrophages, cells that kill bacteria, fungi, and viruses. One such naturally occurring antibiotic is lysozyme; cow's milk contains 1/30 the amount present in breastmilk. Breastmilk provides protection from pneumonia, botulism, bronchitis, staph, influenza, ear infection, and german measles. Cow's milk contains no such immunity from disease. Healthy bacteria present in breastmilk help the baby's gut mature and become infiltrated by healthful bacteria that protects against intestinal tract problems. Again, breastmilk triumphs, there is no positive bacteria in cow's milk that can protect human babies. In addition, the mother produces antibodies to diseases that are present in her own environment. She then passes these immunoglobulins through her milk to her baby. Her milk is customized to protect her infant against diseases that are present in that family's environment.

A mother's milk varies in taste and flavor according to the foods she herself has been eating. This keeps the baby interested. There are no known allergies to breastmilk among babies, only temporary sensitivities to foods the mother has eaten. Soy or cow's milk based formulas often give rise to long-term allergies to soy and/or dairy. The ingestion of dairy is associated with constipation, chronic fatigue, arthritis, headaches, muscle cramps, obesity, and other health problems. Dairy produces excess mucus, which burdens the respiratory, digestive, and immune systems. This diversion from breastmilk could set up the baby for a lifetime of problems.

Breastmilk is always sterile because it flows straight into the mouth of the babe. Formulas can be contaminated by polluted water or dirty bottles, which then spread toxins to the baby. The list of benefits to breastmilk goes on and on. Human hormones and growth factors are present in breastmilk, which helps baby to thrive. Breastmilk contains active digestive enzymes that facilitate the digestion and absorption of nutrients present in the milk. Once again, cow's milk does not.

Cow's milk does contain a larger amount of protein than breastmilk, however that protein is less easily absorbed. Breastmilk contains a multitude of complimentary vitamins, minerals, enzymes, nutrients, and antibodies. They work together to maximize digestion and absorption. For example, lactoferrin is present in breastmilk. Lactoferrin increases iron absorption by binding to iron and assisting in its assimilation. Lactoferrin is destroyed in the formula making process, making the iron in formula poorly assimilated. Therefore, even though breastmilk contains less iron than cow's milk, the iron is more easily assimilated, making it more bioavailable, and readily used by the baby.



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Why Breastmilk is Better than Cow's Milk (continued)

Not to say that cow's milk does not have some advantages, it does. Cow's milk formula is processed thereby removing or reducing inorganic contaminants that may otherwise be present in breastmilk. The mother's diet, if high in certain toxins, will negatively affect the baby because harmful elements, as well as beneficial ones, can be passed through the breastmilk. Mothers infected with HIV should not breastfeed because of this danger. Cow's milk can provide virtually the same vitamin and mineral content, when fortified, but naturally cow's milk provides less calcium and phosphate.

But vitamins and minerals are only half the story, as we have learned above. Human breastmilk is full of other factors that make it crucial to the well being of human infants. Along with the nutritional evidence, we also see countless emotional and psychological benefits to providing human milk for human babies. Sucking at the breast promotes good jaw development and straight, healthy teeth that sucking from a bottle can not provide. Nursing provides skin-to-skin contact that facilitates bonding and provides warmth, comfort and security for the baby and mother. An ill child is especially benefited by such experiences. Infants prefer the smell of their own mother's milk to the milk of another woman, studies show. Further reinforcement that breastmilk is especially created for the specific child of the mother. Babies who are fed breastmilk show higher IQ's later in life, which leaves us in awe of the properties of breastmilk.

In conclusion, I will point out that there are specific instances where breastfeeding is not possible and human milk may not be available for the baby. These special circumstances should be recognized and honored. However, when possible breastmilk is best for babies. Upon consideration of the above evidence it becomes clear that cow's milk pales in comparison to breastmilk.

References:

La Leche International Website

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