

THE Wellness Minute

Immunity Series: 3.0

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Breastfeeding, Formula & Immunity

Breastfeeding Is Natural and Makes Logical Sense, What's All the Fuss?

There has been aggressive third world marketing of infant formula. Women with newborns are given a small supply of formula (enough so their milk dries up) and they then they are forced to be dependent on it. These same formula companies are now devising and funding research (junk research) comparing breastfeeding to formula feeding. It's almost humorous how far their studies are stretched to favor formula feeding. Of course, there are reasons to not breastfeed, especially among unhealthy women who may be hard-drug addicts or alcoholics. Their "first food" may be too weak to pass on immune-boosting material, or their breast milk's toxicity may be enough for the children to inherit the mothers' weaknesses.

What Do Studies Tell Us About The Benefits of Breastfeeding Today?

The University of California, Davis, and UC San Francisco study entitled "Breastfed and bottle-fed infant rhesus macaques develop distinct gut microbiotas (gut bacteria) and immune systems" was published in *Science Translational Medicine* (9/3/14). The researchers used six monkeys that were breastfed and six that were nursery bottle formula-fed for six months, approximating their normal weening times. After the six months, both sets of



six monkeys were put on identical diets. The microbiota in breastfed macaques was more diverse than in the bottle-fed group. This study found that breast-fed infant monkeys had higher gut microbiota diversity than their formula-fed counterparts. But examining their immune systems during their regular diet periods after six months surprised the researchers. By 12 months, the two groups showed significant contrasts, with the differences centered on T cell development. The breastfed group had a much larger percentage of experienced memory T cells, which are better-equipped to secrete immune defense chemicals called cytokines.

This research shows that our gut bacteria developed from breastfeeding leaves a durable positive imprint on our immune system. UNICEF studies have shown that formula-fed babies are at greater risk of gastro-intestinal infection, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, ear infections, allergic disease (eczema, asthma and wheezing), type 1 and type 2 diabetes, obesity, childhood leukemia and SIDS. It's not nice to fool Mother Nature!

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