

[IMAGE]

Another Benefit of Breastfeeding

Despite the wealth of evidence suggesting that breastfeeding is beneficial for children and their mothers, the length of time spent breastfeeding each child is decreasing in the United States. At the same time, breast cancer rates are rising, especially in younger women.

Utilizing information from nearly 50 studies from 30 countries all over the world, the authors of a recent study in *The Lancet* compared the number of children and months spent breastfeeding between 50,000 women with invasive breast cancer and 100,000 cancer-free women.

The risk for breast cancer dropped almost 5% for each year a mother spent breastfeeding her children. Additionally, each childbirth reduced her risk for breast cancer by 7%. Thus, a woman with three children, all of whom were breastfed for a year, would be about 35% less likely to have breast cancer than a woman who had not had children or breastfed.

If you plan on having kids, consider breastfeeding instead of using infant formula. In addition to preventing breast cancer, breastfeeding may protect your baby against infection, high cholesterol, allergies, obesity, and developmental problems. Evidence suggests that women who breastfeed also return to their prepregnancy weight faster than other mothers.

Reference:

Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer. Breast cancer and breastfeeding: Collaborative reanalysis of individual data from 47 epidemiological studies in 30 countries, including 50,302 women with breast cancer and 96,973 women without the disease. *The Lancet* 2002;360, pp. 187-195.

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