

Breast milk in child care settings

How long should children breastfeed?

Health Canada, The Canadian Paediatric Society and York Region Community and Health Services recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life, with continued breastfeeding along with solid foods for two years and beyond.

Child care settings support continued breastfeeding by offering expressed breast milk in a mother's absence.

Why is breast milk important for young children?

Breastfed children get sick less often and are less likely to experience:

- Ear infections
- Lower respiratory tract infection
- Diarrhea
- Allergy and asthma
- Diabetes and obesity
- Childhood cancers
- Chronic diseases
- Poor scores on developmental and cognitive tests (IQ)

Many of the health effects of breastfeeding are dose-related – the longer the child receives human milk, the lower the incidence of illness.

Why is breast milk important for mothers?

Breastfeeding protects women's health. Women who breastfeed are less likely to experience:

- Depression
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Weak bones
- Breast and ovarian cancer
- Obesity

Many of the health effects of breastfeeding are dose-related — the longer a woman breastfeeds, the greater the protective effect against disease.

1-800-361-5653

TTY (for those with hearing disabilities) **1-866-252-9933**



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Why is breast milk important for families, employers and workers?

Continued breastfeeding after returning to work is associated with:

- Lower incidence of some illnesses and infections that can spread between children in child care settings
- Fewer parental days off work to care for ill children
- Decreased health care costs and benefit claims
- Less financial burden for families — purchasing artificial baby milk, bottles and equipment can be costly

Are there special instructions for handling breast milk?

Safe handling, storage and administration of breast milk are important in order to minimize the risk of contamination and infection to children and staff. As breast milk is a body fluid, child care staff should:

- Store human milk according to York Region Community and Health Services Storing expressed breast milk
- Ensure bottles and containers are labelled (date, name of infant/child and name of mother)
- Double-check the name on the breast milk bottle with another colleague to ensure the correct child is receiving the correct human milk. Staff members should document this double-check process
- Clean hands before and after handling breast milk
- Wear gloves when handling and feeding breast milk if there is a risk of getting milk on the hands. This is especially true for cleaning up spills

If a child consumes human milk that is not intended for him/her, please contact a health-care provider immediately.

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (PIDAC). Best practices for infection prevention and control in perinatology. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2012.



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