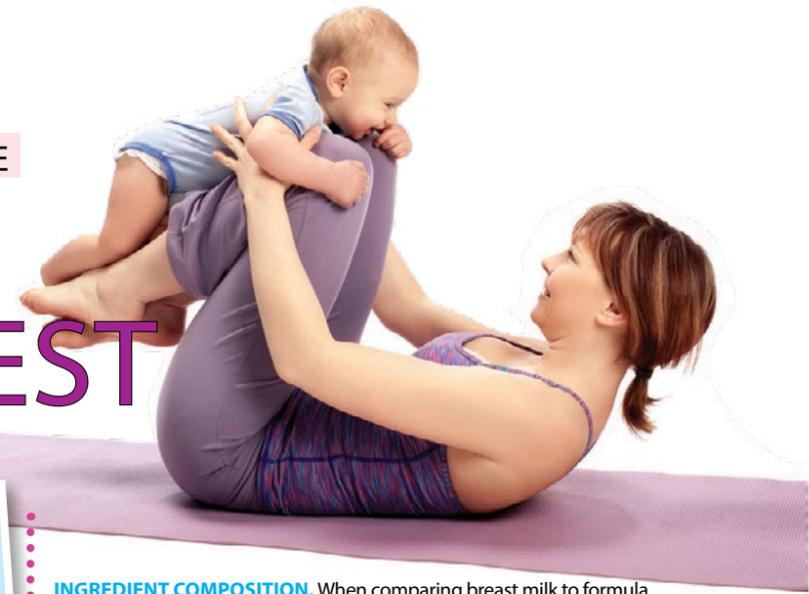


# BREAST VS BOTTLE

SHINING LIGHT ON THE DEBATE REGARDING BREASTFEEDING AND FORMULA FEEDING

BY CHANEL SCHOEMAN



# IS BREAST BEST FOR MOM & BABY?

**C**ertain breastfeeding activists recently caused a bit of a stir in confessing that they no longer declare "breast is best". According to Melissa Bartick lead researcher of an article in the journal of Pediatrics (2010): "It's not best, it's not optimal. It's just the normal." "It's like saying, 'How does exercising improve health?' It's the physiological norm.", adds Alison Stuebe from the Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine at the University of North Carolina.

So how did something that has been central to human survival and growth through the millennia become sidelined to such an extent that modern moms need to be reminded that it's normal?

Here we have to mention Justus von Leibig, a chemist whose 1865 invention of cow's milk, wheat- and malt flour, and potassium bicarbonate as a substitute for human milk, lay the foundation for the multi-billion dollar formula industry. Less than 100 years later (toward the late 1950s) formula had become the feeding method of choice in the developed world – blowing powder in the face of more than three million years of human-evolution-perfected nursing. For the first time in history breastfeeding became optional, an alternative to formula feeding which, promoted by aggressive advertising campaigns, became seen as more modern,

convenient, sociable and beneficial to mom.

And so was born a hot bone of contention in the mommy wars: Should you breastfeed or should you formula feed? Is it mother's choice or do you have an obligation? The bone is buried in murky territory, fraught with societal, developmental, physical and emotional complexities. No matter what their crystal clear pre-birth disposition was – somewhere in the realities of baby feeding – many an earth mother has reached for formula in the context of modern lifestyle pressures, whereas countless emancipated corporate climbers have, often to their own surprise, taken to breastfeeding, melted by infantile attachment.

So what's the big difference between breast milk and formula that makes baby feeding such a loaded topic?

**INGREDIENT COMPOSITION.** When comparing breast milk to formula milk, both contain water, protein, carbohydrates, fat, DHA/ARA, vitamins and minerals. But that's where the similarities end. When formula feeding, your baby will miss out on the following superhero health building blocks, because only breast milk contains:

- Enzymes, intestinal soothers, growth factors, hormones, anti-viruses, antibodies, anti-allergies and anti-parasites.

**HOWEVER, FORMULA MILK CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING UNWANTED SUBSTANCES, WHICH BREASTFED BABIES ARE NOT EXPOSED TO:**

- Tropical oils, intestinal irritants, poorly absorbed nutrients, micro-deficiencies, and allergens such as cow's milk or soybeans, among others.

Furthermore, breastfeeding's advantages to babies are well documented:



BREAST MILK:	WHEREAS FORMULA:
• Promotes a healthy immune system in infancy and beyond.	• Is artificial, has risks and could require extra medical care. It is linked to increases in many illnesses and diseases, including SIDS, pneumonia, vision deficits, diabetes
• Changes to meet the baby's changing needs.	• Foods, medications or physical conditions of the mother are not a concern to baby.
• Promotes brain development.	• Is linked to lower IQ scores.
• Promotes normal jaw development.	• Increases need for orthodontia.
• Lets baby control his own appetite.	• Can lead to overfeeding and obesity. Is not as easily digestible, thus babies need to eat less often. Parents know exactly how much baby consumed.
• Is always clean.	• Is easily and frequently contaminated.

But what's in it for the mom – or are they being reduced to hapless hosts to little dairy parasites? Here, research has found that communication of the full spectrum of breastfeeding advantages has fallen short and mothers would be more likely to persist past initial breastfeeding niggles if benefits to mothers and families were understood. These include:

BREAST MILK:	WHEREAS FORMULA:
• Is a relationship - encourages mother-baby bonding, provides mothering hormones and promotes emotional health.	• Is a feeding method and others can feed the baby. Formula feeding mothers are more prone to postpartum anxiety and depression.
• Is the normal follow-up to birth for the mother. It delays ovulation and promotes natural child spacing (although not fail-safe).	• Women who do not breastfeed have an increased risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancers, as well as osteoporosis and hip fractures in post-menopausal years.
• Promotes faster postpartum weight loss through efficient mobilisation of fat stores.	• Mothers, on average, retained an additional 7½ cm of fat around their waists and were more at risk for diabetes.
• Is almost free – save for a slight increase in the mother's food costs.	• Is costly – estimated at roughly R3000–R6000 per baby per year.
• Is immediate and simple.	• Needs equipment and preparation.

Okay, but in practice, is breastfeeding adaptable to our modern lifestyles or is it an archaic ritual best left in the tree tops with our ancestors? Happily it can suit today's mom as comfortably as any matriarch in the past. Here are planning and preparation tips to make breastfeeding work.

## DURING PREGNANCY:

- **Educate yourself** – Read up about breastfeeding: La Leche League ([www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org)) and <http://kellymom.com> have excellent online resources. Take a breastfeeding class at a birth centre or as part of antenatal classes.
- **Enlist support** – Get your partner and family on board. Make sure they're up to speed with the benefits and reasons for breastfeeding. Talk to other moms who have successfully breastfed for tips and motivation. Attend a La Leche League meeting to get your questions answered and meet other bosom buddies.
- **Go for natural birth** – Babies born via unmedicated labour often breastfeed more easily.
- **Stock up on at least two good supportive nursing bras** (with space to expand...), nursing pads, 100% purified lanolin ointment, and easy access nursing tops.



### • The right technique

Ensure that baby is well-positioned to the breast, latches to a large part of the areola (not just the nipple) and you are comfortable. Ensure baby drinks from both breasts during each feeding.

### • Get help early if you battle or when it hurts.

Some breasts get engorged or some babies latch incorrectly causing discomfort. Don't be a martyr, rather act immediately to restore enjoyment. Go to a physio for breast massage, ultrasound or hot and cold treatment. See a lactation consultant for problem-solving and practical advice (to find one in your area go to [www.motherinstinct.co.za/#!breastfeeding-support/c208t](http://www.motherinstinct.co.za/#!breastfeeding-support/c208t))

### • Shun pacifiers and dummies

(at least for the first six weeks) to avoid nipple confusion and cement the required sucking technique.

### • Persevere

– just because its natural does not mean it will come easy to everyone. During the first few weeks it is normal to struggle a bit and feel like you're being milked around the clock. Take heart, with patience and the right info breastfeeding is soon bound to become convenient and enjoyable.

## GETTING STARTED:

- **Immediately after delivery** put baby to the breast within the first hour when instinct is at its strongest to establish successful breastfeeding patterns.
- **Room in with baby** so that you can breastfeed frequently and on demand to establish a full milk supply (and avoid formula interference from hospital staff).

## SOME MOMS STILL WORRY THAT THE DEMANDS OF A NURSING BABY WILL LEAVE VERY LITTLE TIME FOR HAVING A LIFE THEMSELVES

- For instance, from a fitness perspective, will there be time for exercise and should one exercise or will it affect milk supply? The very pragmatic answer is that women with babies have always worked – they had to – and often this work entailed fairly strenuous manual labour. We also feel better when we get exercise, and this is certainly good for both mother and baby. Some important points to bear in mind are:
  - Wait until the baby is at least six weeks old and start the exercise slowly and gradually.
  - Conveniently, some kinds of exercise can be done with baby.
  - Walking briskly, mild aerobic exercises and water exercises are ideal in the beginning, while swimming and aerobics are good for later on.
- Be sure to consume liquids to replace those lost by sweating.
- Don't do too much. It will tire you and take you away for too long. If you want to breastfeed, you need to be there. Another myth that needs to be debunked is the perception that breastfeeding causes droopy breasts. Happily, breastfeeding is not the main culprit. Sadly, pregnancy is, so there's no escape. During pregnancy your breasts undergo changes and grow larger. After birth breast milk fills your breasts stretching the skin even more – whether you decide to breastfeed or not. Once the milk is gone your breasts may appear smaller, less full or less saggy depending on genetics, your weight gain, smoking habits and the number of pregnancies you've had.

*Breastfeeding should be a no-brainer health choice when it is an option. The World Health Organisation recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, whereafter it should be continued with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age and beyond. In the larger scheme of things this is such a small period of time, so step up, because there is almost nothing you can do that will affect your child's whole life, emotionally and physically, as much as breastfeeding will.*

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