

Better than Breastfeeding

If you are a new mother, you may find that you "Breast Feed" your baby in the early weeks by thinking of your breast as a flesh-covered bottle. You may worry that you can't count the ounces, and wonder if your baby is getting enough. You will find yourself saying, "She can't be hungry again; she just ate!" You may firmly believe that a clock is essential "Breast Feeding" equipment, and if you're like some of us, you'll keep a diary of "Feedings" and time them with a stopwatch!

Gradually, you may find that you can't remember when she last "ate", or for how long, and you won't care. You won't know how often she roused at night, because you just rolled over, offered your breast, and went back to sleep. You'll have no idea how often you put your baby to breast each day. It's simply the easiest way to mother. You're not "Breast Feeding" anymore; you're "mothering your baby at your breast." You're Nursing!

A nursing relationship is a short, irreplaceable time in your life. After the first few weeks of getting to know that little stranger and adjusting to motherhood, you'll realize that you're happier with your baby than without her, and that your need to "get out" is more a need to socialize than to escape your baby. Since she's nursing, she's easy to take along - no extra bottles, no dangling pacifier, no cooler to keep the formula from souring. You'll find she fits easily on your hip or in a sling, and you'll figure out that she cries much less if she's in your arms.

You may discover that sitting down to nurse helps you "mellow out" on a bad day. That's not just because you're resting. The hormones produced during a nursing session actually help you cope with stress more easily.

You'll find the two of you have so many good reasons for nursing - to soothe away a hurt or scare, to gentle her off to sleep, to keep her busy while you're on the phone - that your baby is hardly ever really hungry, and has one less reason to cry.

After a few months, your baby will smile up at you while she nurses, and maybe pat your face. But when she smiles, milk will run out the corner of her mouth, and she'll have to get back to work. Your earliest games together may be at the breast - peekaboo with your blouse, or baby-toes-in-your-mouth. One day, you'll look down at her in your arms, sound asleep at your breast, and know that you're offering her one of life's greatest luxuries.

If the two of you nurse long enough, she may even tell you how wonderful it is: "Mommy, your nee-nees are nicer than nobody else's!" or just, "Mmmm good!" Eventually, your little one will move on to other things, but as one new weanling told her mother with satisfaction, "Mommy, your milk will last me forever."

"Breast Feeding?" No. Nursing!

©2001 Diane Wiessinger, MS, IBCLC
136 Ellis Hollow Creek Road Ithaca, NY 14850
Used with permission