

"Normal" is a Very Scary Word

You've probably heard many times that breastfed babies are "healthier". That they have "fewer illnesses." That they have a "special" bond with their mothers. Maybe even that they tend to be "smarter". Some of those reasons may be why you decided to breastfeed.

The scary thing is, none of those statements is really true. Breastfeeding is merely the way human infants are built to eat, just as air is what they are built to breathe, or walking is the way they are built to move when they get older. Breastfeeding is nothing extra or special. Breastfeeding is just... normal.

Fine. So breastfeeding is normal. What's so scary about that? Ah, well if breastfeeding is normal, what happens when a baby is not breastfed? The scary reality is... he's much more likely to get sick, in infancy, in childhood, as an adult. His life expectancy is a little bit shorter and his IQ is a little bit lower. His relationship with his mother is different. In short, he suffers from not having a normal start to life.

You probably know breastfed people who are sicker than many formula-fed people. Breastfeeding is no guarantee. It's like the yeast in bread: every loaf turns out differently, because of different temperature, moisture, timing, kneading. But for any particular loaf, if you leave out some of the yeast it's not going to rise as high as it could.

Here's part of the scary list:

People who were not breastfed tend to have:

- poorer vision
- a lower IQ
- more appendicitis
- more breast cancer
- more hernias
- more diabetes
- more childhood cancer
- less well-developed nerves
- a thymus smaller than normal during infancy
- a less effective immune system
- more trouble with cholesterol
- more emotional problems
- more intestinal disorders
- more allergies
- more risk of crooked teeth or underformed jaws
- a higher risk of SIDS

Women who don't breastfeed tend to have:

- more premenopausal breast cancer
- higher anxiety
- lower self-esteem
- more osteoporosis
- more cervical cancer
- less pleasure in early parenting

There are about 13,000 studies showing problems with formula-feeding, so why haven't you heard any of this before? Maybe someone thought it was too scary for you, that you would feel guilty, that you wouldn't be interested, that it doesn't really matter that much. But wouldn't you rather know now, instead of finding out later?

Breastfeeding. It's just plain normal.

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