

Breastfeeding can increase baby's brain development

It's long been said that breast milk is best for newborns. About 85 percent of new mothers who give birth at the University of Michigan Health System follow that advice by initiating breastfeeding before leaving the Hospital and then continuing to breastfeed on an average, for the first six months.

Now doctors at the UMHS are encouraging mothers to breastfeed their newborns through their first year of life not only based on its initial health benefits to the child, but also due to the long-term impact it can have, including an increase in a child's cognitive development and a reduced risk for certain cancer in a mother, says Dr. Gary Freed, director of the Division of General Pediatrics in the Department of Pediatric and Communicable Disease at the UMHS.

Benefits
The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians recommends that children receive breast milk for the first year of life. Breastfed newborns tend to have a lower incidence of ear infections, respiratory infections, gastroenteritis, diarrheal illness, and a lower rate of hospitalization than children who are formula fed.

"We know in the first year of life, there's a tremendous protection against many infectious diseases," said Freed. "However, there's likely to be benefits that last 20, 30, or even 40 years because we know that organ development in infants has a big impact on how those organs function later in life."

Although it can be difficult to separate environmental and social influences from a child's cognitive development, there have been several recent and controlled studies done to prove that breast milk's long-term benefits are really food for thought. The studies, Freed says, have shown that breastfed children on average have a slightly higher IQ than formula fed children.

But beyond its benefits to a child, breastfeeding can have a significant impact on a mother's health. Nursing moms burn 500 more calories a day than women who are not pregnant or nursing, which works to speed up their weight loss after childbirth. Also, a baby's nursing causes a woman's uterus to contract and reduces blood-flow after delivery and creates a lesser chance she will later develop breast cancer or even uterine cancer.

Social factors
The environment and a fami-

ly's finances also reap the benefits of breastfeeding. When a family chooses to breastfeed a child instead of using formula, there is not only a decrease in air, water and land pollution from the production of formula and its packaging, but a family also can save about \$2,000 a year that would otherwise have been spent on formula.

Even in light of all of its health, environment and financial advantages, possibly one of the greatest benefits of breastfeeding is the connection that it creates between an infant and a mother, says Freed.

"People have been able to demonstrate the phenomenal bond that takes place between a mother and an infant throughout the process of nursing," says Freed. "There have been studies to show that the rates of child abuse are lower in women who breastfed their babies — both rates of abuse from the mom as well as rates of abuse from the dad."

Still, many moms worry breastfeeding excludes dad from helping with the baby. But according to Freed, that doesn't happen. Dad can play an important role in breastfeeding by providing support for mom and baby, and by participating in the feeding process by, for example, going to get the

baby for nighttime feedings. Cooperation from all members within a family can make all the difference when breastfeeding. Without proper support, some women can easily become discouraged and believe that they are just unable to breastfeed. But Freed warns that women shouldn't give in so soon to that common misconception.

"If a large proportion of women in our population couldn't breastfeed, then it's likely our species would have died out several thousand years ago when there were no human milk substitutes," says Freed. In fact, only about 3 percent of the entire female population is unable to produce enough milk to support their children.

Other women may just have difficulty breastfeeding as the result of a lack of proper instruction or support from health care professionals.

Of the estimated 50 percent of women in the United States who initiate breastfeeding, only 20 percent continue to breastfeed their babies after six months. This, Freed says, may be the result of some women having difficulty judging whether or not their baby is getting enough milk because they haven't received correct instructions on how to increase their milk supply, or learned how to make

their bodies produce enough milk to nourish their infants.

"For something that's supposed to be so natural and so easy, it can be really tough to get it started and, a lot of times, people need some practical guidance and problem solving advice from the medical profession," says Freed. "We all need to work together to help moms and dads make this as smooth and successful a process as possible."

Risk factors

The benefits of breastfeeding however, can be greatly altered if the mother ingests substances that can be potentially harmful to a baby, like alcohol or nicotine products, when transferred through breast milk.

When it comes to smoking, there can be a great risk to the baby's health. Using nicotine-containing products while nursing has many negative consequences and Freed strongly recommends that women not smoke if they are breastfeeding.

The use of herbal supplements also raises some concerns with breastfeeding. Since the concentrations of herbal products are not regulated, it has been difficult to determine the effects they may have on breast milk.

"Herbal medications, for the most part, are a black box," says Freed. "Because no studies have

been done to determine the impact on babies for many of the herbal medications, we strongly feel that women should exercise significant caution in ingesting any medication, whether it be prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal, while they're breastfeeding." He advises that women discuss these matters with their physician.

One thing that's not in doubt is the effect of a healthy diet. Nursing moms need to maintain a well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, calcium, prenatal vitamins, and minimal amount of caffeine, to produce enough milk for their babies.

Overall, Freed says, if a nursing mom is properly instructed, and knows all of the precautions she should take, breastfeeding can be a rewarding and even relaxing experience.

Colleen Smyth, a nursing mom who got advice from U-M experts, recommends breastfeeding to all expectant moms because it will give them an opportunity every day to sit down and spend quality time with their babies.

"It's a very special time to bond with your baby and to look and see how much your baby has grown — and you know that it's come from nature and your body," says Smyth. "It's just a rewarding, wonderful feeling."

BUSINESS CALENDAR

TUES, APRIL 10
QUALITY PLANNING SEMINAR
The Anglier Quality Institute presents "Symposium 2001: Project Management as it Relates to Advanced Quality Planning," an all-day seminar beginning 8 a.m. at Madonna University, University Center, Livonia. Murray

Sittesamer of The Luminous Group will be the presenter, and John McElroy will be the lunch speaker. Cost is \$95 for the entire day, including Continental breakfast and lunch, or \$25 for lunch with John McElroy. Call (734) 432-5354 or fax (248) 432-5364.

CAREER WOMEN
The West Suburban Chapter of the National Association of Career Women will host their monthly luncheon meeting 11:45

a.m. at Ernesto's, 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth. "Smart Women Finish Rich" is the name of the fun and educational seminar. Cost is \$18 per member and \$22 for non-members. Call Brenda Durling at (734) 462-4670.

WED, APRIL 11
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
The Michigan Business and Professional Association will host its

fifth annual Women's Leadership Conference and Awards Program 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. (registration 7:30 a.m.) at the Burton Manor, located on I-96 service drive, west of Inkster Road, in Livonia. Luncheon and awards ceremony begins at noon. Workshops and awards luncheon, \$50; awards luncheon, \$25. (810) 978-6322

NOTED PHOTOGRAPHER
The public is invited to attend the meeting of the Ann Arbor Ad

Club at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor, to meet Nick Kelsch, one of the country's most talented photographers. Kelsch is currently principal and head of photography at Thinkframe. His recent projects have included the books *Naked Babies* and the sequel *Stobbing*, on which he collaborated with Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Anna Quindlen. Cocktail hour begins at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. and presentation by

Kelsch at 7:30 p.m. Attendance is free to members of the Ann Arbor Ad Club, \$30 for non-members and guests and \$20 for students. For reservations, call (734) 332-9033. On-line registrations: www.a2ac.org.

BUSINESS NETWORK INT'L
Laurel Park Chapter meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Archie's Family Restaurant, Plymouth Road (east of Merriman), Livonia. Call the BNI regional office at (810) 323-3800.

Medical

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WED, APRIL 11
DIABETES MANAGEMENT
The Diabetes Support Group at St. Mary Mercy Hospital will host a discussion, "Take Charge: Lead the Way to Better Diabetes Control," led by Marti Funnell, MS, RN, CDE, from 7-8:30 p.m. in the hospital's Auditorium. The group regularly meets on the second Wednesday of each month for adults with diabetes and their family members. Free. No pre-registration required. St. Mary Mercy Hospital is located at 36475 Five Mile Road, at Levan Road, in Livonia. Call (734) 655-8940.

HA, HA, HA
St. Mary Hospital in Livonia will present "The Funny Bone is Connected to the ... 1-3 p.m. in the hospital's Auditorium as part of its Senior Health Connection "Let's Talk" lecture series. Amy Rhode, RNC, will discuss the positive physiological effects of laughter on the immune system. There is a fee for this class. To pre-register, call (734) 655-8940.

WED, APRIL 11
CHIROPRACTIC CLASS
Dr. Patrick Jary will offer "Health Through Chiropractic," a free lecture/discussion, 7:30-8:45 p.m. at the Carl Sandburg Library, 30100 W. Seven Mile Road (1/4 mile west of Livonia Mall), Livonia. He will discuss human anatomy and the differences between traditional medicine and chiropractic medicine. Call (734) 622-5501 or (248) 893-4010.

THUR, APRIL 12
CAREGIVING 101:
St. Mary Mercy Hospital offers Caregiving 101 to help ease the burdens of caregivers responsible for the care of adults with chronic illness or dementia. April 12 from 7-8:30 p.m. "Special Skills: Caring for the Person with Dementia" will be the topic in the West Addition B. \$10 per session. Call 655-8940.

FRI, APRIL 13
BLOOD DRIVE
The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive 8 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. at St. Thomas a Becket Church, 555 Lilley Road (just south of Cherry Hill), Canton. Call Peggy at (734) 397-8495 or Marion at (734) 981-3433.



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