

Things to look out for if you use formula

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On the morning of July 30, 2016, Ritah Namirimu gave birth to a baby girl at Mulago hospital. She was advised by a doctor to breastfeed her within the first hour of delivery. "My baby weighed 3.9 kilogrammes," she says.

Namirimu says she would wake up at 5am and breastfeed the baby for one hour before leaving home. At work, she would express and refrigerate the milk and this is what she gave the baby at home.

"I breastfed exclusively for the first two months and three weeks prior to reporting back for work, I started expressing milk," says Namirimu, an accountant.

She also says she breastfed her baby for two years.

The decision to breastfeed or feed your baby on formula is personal. But weighing the pros and cons of each method can help you decide what is best for you and your baby. There are countless advantages to breastfeeding your child.

Fighting infections

David Desmond Walugembe, a nutritionist at Nsambya hospital, says breast milk has Omega 3 fatty acids and antibodies that help to boost the baby's immunity thus resisting illnesses such as asthma.

Digestion

Breast milk is easily digested so that breastfed babies suffer less from diarrhoea or constipation. Breast milk also naturally contains many of the vitamins and minerals a newborn requires.

Free

Breast milk is free, while the cost of formula is always rising. There is also no need for bottles, artificial nipples, and other supplies that can be costly.

Different tastes

Because a mother's diet consists of different foods, babies are able to get all the different nutrients from their mother's milk.

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maintain proper hygiene for the good of both mother and baby. They can also provide a balanced diet and lots of fluids such as juice so that she is able to get breast milk to feed the baby."
PETER KYALIGONZA, A FATHER

cooking among ... be taken over by the hubby ... family members to give the mother enough time with the baby."
LEONARD OMOLLO, A FATHER OF THREE

... energy and stay hea... should also be on hand to help with the baby so that the mother can have enough rest.
JAMILAH ADAM NANSOSO, A MOTHER OF ONE

Things to look out for if you use formula

Choosing whether to breastfeed or formula-feed a baby is a decision expectant and new mothers will make. Whatever your choice, weighing the pros and cons is important.

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Convenience
Breast milk is always fresh and available. There is no need to wash bottles and nipples or wake up to warm up bottles in the middle of the night.

Smarter babies
Some studies suggest that children who were exclusively breastfed for the first six months have slightly higher IQs than children who were formula-fed.

Beneficial for mom
The ability to totally nourish a baby can help a new mother feel confident in her ability to care for her baby. Breastfeeding also burns calories and helps shrink the uterus, so nursing mothers may be able to return to their pre-pregnancy shape and weight quicker.

According to Walugembe, breastfeeding helps lower the risk of breast cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

It may also help decrease the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer.

However, breastfeeding also comes with a number of challenges.

Personal comfort
Initially, many mothers feel uncomfortable with breastfeeding.



While breast feeding, a mother is able to bond with her new born child. NET PHOTO

But with proper education, support and practice, most mothers will get used to the process.

Time of feeding
Breastfeeding requires commitment from mothers, especially in the beginning, when babies feed often. A breastfeeding schedule or the need to pump breast milk during the day can make it harder for some mothers to work and run do other chores.

Diet
Mothers should avoid eating or taking certain drinks such as alcohol or caffeine before breast feeding a child.

Check up
A woman should check with her doctor if she is unsure she should breastfeed with a specific condition such as HIV. Mothers should also check with the doctor about the safety of taking medicines while breastfeeding.

While breastfeeding is encouraged, for different reasons, there are mothers who fail to breastfeed their babies. Commercially prepared infant formulas are a nutritious alternative to breast milk, and even contains some vitamins and nutrients that breastfed babies need to get from supplements.

Convenience
Formula-feeding allows a mother to share feeding duties with a partner who will in turn feel more involved in the crucial feeding process and the bonding that often comes with it.

Flexibility
Once the bottles are made, a formula-feeding mother can leave her baby with a partner or caregiver and have a peace of mind knowing that her baby's feeding is taken care of.

Time of feeding
Because formula is less digestible than breast milk, formula-fed babies usually need to eat less often than breastfed babies.

Diet
Women who opt to formula-feed do not have to worry about the things they eat or drink that could affect their babies. However, there are challenges associated with formula-feeding.

Lack of antibodies
None of the antibodies found in breast milk are in manufactured formula. Therefore, formula can not provide a baby with the added protection against infection and illness that breast milk does.

Planning
Unlike breast milk, formula feeding your baby requires planning and organisation to make sure that you have what you need when you need it.

Expense
Formula can be costly. In Uganda, one tin costs between Shs80,000 and Shs100,000 and usually a tin will last for just one week.

Deciding how to feed your baby is not easy. Many women decide on one method before the birth and then change their minds after. Before making a decision, talk to your doctor who will give you information about the options available.

Additional information from; www.kidshealth.org

80,000

THE APPROXIMATE COST OF ONE TIN OF FORMULA MILK IN UGANDA SHILLINGS.

THE STATISTICS

The Ugandan Demographic Health Survey of 2016 states that only 66 per cent of children below six months are exclusively breastfed. The 34 per cent is divided as follows; seven per cent of babies are given plain water, six per cent are given non-milk liquids such as juice, eight per cent are given formulas and 11 per cent are breastfed and introduced to complementary feeds as early as four months.

WHY FORMULA IS BETTER THAN COW MILK

Doctor Moses Semweya of Le' Memorial Hospital Seguku, says cow milk is not suitable for children under one year because it contains high levels of protein and salt that cannot be broken down by their undeveloped digestive system. It also does not provide Vitamin E and Iron that a growing baby needs.

Infant formula attempts to mimic the composition or performance of human milk. It has proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Most baby formulas have a cow's milk base, but soy-based formulas are available for babies who are allergic to milk.

By Carolyne B. Atoganza

DIET

According to David Desmond Walugembe, a nutritionist at Nsambya hospital, the diet of a breastfeeding mother is tailored according to her condition. Though all nursing mothers should eat a balanced diet, there are differences between diets for mothers who have had C-section and those who had vaginal delivery.

C-section mothers require a high protein diet to regain energy and heal fast. They are normally weaker as compared to those that have vaginal delivery. Mothers who have had a vaginal delivery need to eat foods rich in iron to compensate for blood lost during delivery.

Reginah Nantege, a dietician at Nsambya hospital, explains that a nursing mother needs a balanced diet to be healthy so that she can breastfeed effectively. Foods such as offals are recommended because they contain a high number of calories which a mother needs and are also rich in minerals such as sodium and iron.



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