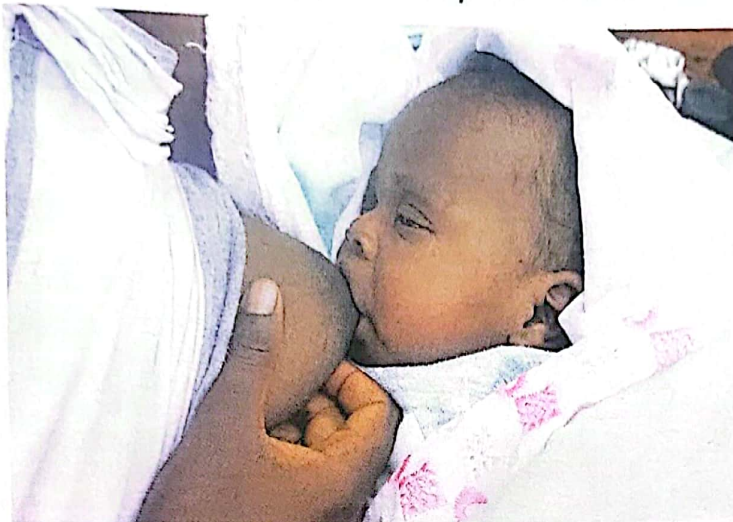


# HOW TO PREPARE FOR...

## EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

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discussed by the mother and her gynaecologist so that she is emotionally prepared for it," Namusoke explains.

The mother then needs to put structures for the suckling baby; she needs to have her nipples well prepared. Mothers are advised to start pulling out the nipple in the third trimester of the pregnancy so that the nipples are ready.

"To produce breast milk, you will need a sound mind and rested body," Namusoke says. When the hormone is

produced it will need nutrients to work on in order to produce breast milk so, the mother must feed well. She must eat a balanced diet.

When the milk is produced and the ducts are full you need to empty the milk so the baby will have to suckle it out or the mother needs to pump it out to create the room for more milk to be produced.

"Monitor the health of your baby because a sick baby will not have the energy to suckle. Premature babies also do not

suckle the breast because they do not have that reflex," Namusoke notes.

Therefore, she advises new mothers to seek medical advice if a new-born fails to suckle.

### Hygiene

Mind your hygiene; experts advise that the nipples should be cleaned thoroughly, preferably with warm water before breastfeeding.

The mother should also observe her general hygiene as she handles the baby.

### Positioning the baby

The position of the baby during breastfeeding also matters. The baby should be close to the mother with its abdomen facing the mother's whether in a sleeping or sitting position. The baby's back should also be straight with the head resting on the mother's elbow.

When the breast is put to the

## BENEFITS

Josette Ssanyu, a public health dietician summarises the benefits of breast milk with the acronym AFASS (affordable, feasible, acceptable, sustainable and safe).

"Breast milk comprises all the right nutrients for the varying ages; the colostrum (the first milk to be produced after a woman has given birth) has fat and proteins which fit the nutrient requirements of the new baby," Dr Hellen Namusoke, a paediatrician at Bethany Children's Clinic in Luzira explains.

Colostrum is the sticky white or yellow fluid secreted from the mammary glands after giving birth. Its rich in protective antibodies that boost the new-born's immune system.

Breast milk prevents malnutrition and obesity among infants, unlike the supplementary feeds.

"If you look at formula-fed babies, many of them are obese because the nutrients are not tailored to meet the needs of babies at different weeks of growth," Namusoke states.

The antibodies in the colostrum and breast milk improve the baby's immunity.

"The maternal antibodies help the baby to fight off common infections such that even if the baby suffers from diarrhoea they are not adversely affected," Ssanyu says.

Episodes of sickness are also reduced because breast milk is safe and clean.

As a mother breastfeeds and holds the baby on the chest, she becomes emotionally attached.

"This bonding during breastfeeding also helps in the brain, sensory and cognitive development of the baby," Namusoke says.

Aside from the baby, the mother also benefits from breastfeeding. The practice protects the new mother from postpartum haemorrhaging (over bleeding after giving birth) because of oxytocin hormone produced while the mother is breastfeeding.

"The hormone is not only responsible for stimulation of milk ejection but also stimulation of uterine smooth muscle contraction," Namusoke explains.

Breastfeeding can be used as a method of family planning called the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM) according to [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com) an online medical journal.

When you breastfeed, the same hormones that make milk (prolactin) also suppress the release of hormones such as oestrogen that cause the eggs to mature and become fertile.

This explains why breastfeeding mothers experience a delay in the return of their menstrual periods. However, after six months, a mother is advised to use another method of birth control. Breastfeeding is affordable and sustainable. Breast milk is readily available and the bonus is the baby rarely falls sick so this increases the family's resources.

baby, they will start by grabbing the nipple, but as they continue breastfeeding, the mother should keep extending the breast so that the baby's mouth holds the areola (the ring of pigmented skin around the nipple).

This is because when the baby holds ones nipple, it is bound to be bruised and that causes a lot of pain, the baby will also

not have a tight grip hence interrupting the breastfeeding process. The mother's back should also be upright.

"The baby should meet the breast and not the mother bringing the breast to the baby because the back will hurt causing discomfort. This can interrupt breastfeeding," Namusoke warns.

## Did you know?

Dr Hellen Namusoke, a paediatrician at Bethany Children's Clinic in Luzira, says exclusive breastfeeding is when a baby is fed on breast milk and not any other milk or liquid, not even water.

This can be done directly by breastfeeding or by giving breast milk from a bottle after it is expressed by a mother.

By Jacqueline Emodok

On September 3, Shalom Kaii Odeke will be making three months old. Her typical day consists of breastfeeding, sleeping, bathing, breastfeeding and more again, breastfeeding.

Kiai is breastfed on demand and the mother consumes lots of fluids such as porridge and soup. The mother also eats a balanced diet to ensure adequate production of breast milk.

From the look of things, Kaii's best activity of the day is breastfeeding, a conclusion her mother arrived at based on her baby's body language.

She tends to smile a lot during breastfeeding; her mother also talks to her and as a result, Kaii has started recognising her mother's voice.

### Healthy growth

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. It should be done on demand (as often as the child wants) day and night.

Breastfeeding should be initiated within the first hour of a baby's life and mothers are advised to exclusively breastfeed for six months.

"It should be started within the first hour of birth to encourage skin contact because it creates bonding," Josette Ssanyu, a public health dietician, explains.

### Preparing for breastfeeding

Although breastfeeding is a natural act, it is a learned behaviour.

Dr Hellen Namusoke, a paediatrician at Bethany Children's Clinic in Luzira, says this explains why medical personnel often see new mothers that cannot breastfeed their babies.

Both mother and baby have to be prepared for it. Ideally preparation for breastfeeding should start during antenatal care in the last months of a pregnancy (third trimester).

"In the course of this period, breastfeeding should be