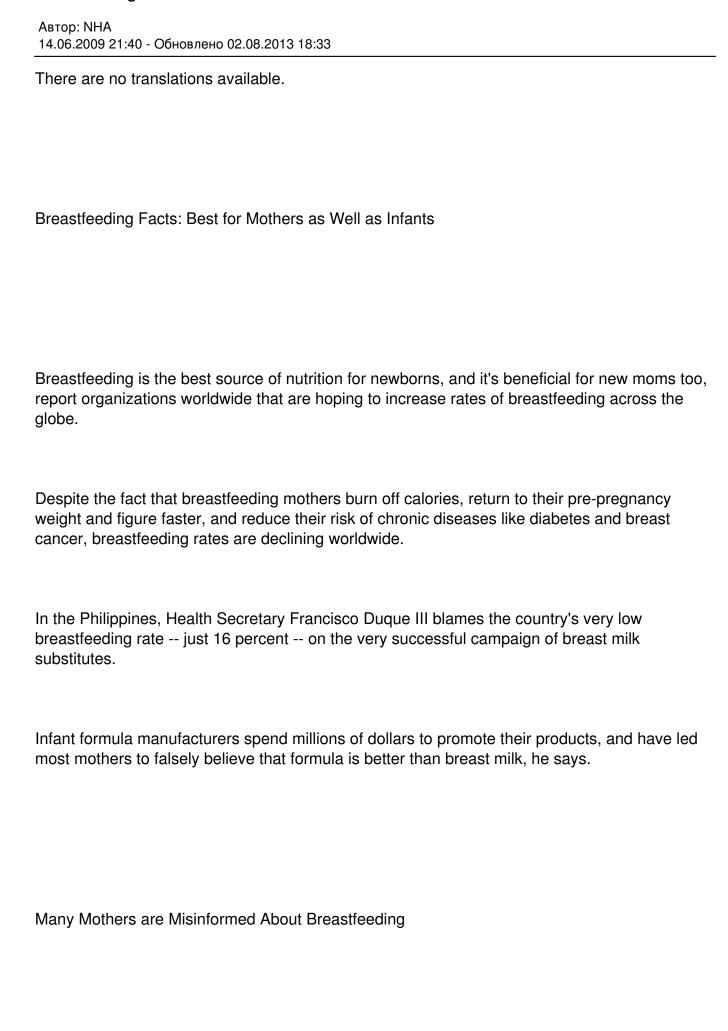
## **Breastfeeding - Facts**



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Along with the strong advertising campaigns of infant-formula companies, misinformation has prompted many women to not breastfeed.

According to worldwide surveys, the most common reason why mothers said they didn't breastfeed was that they didn't have enough milk. Another common reason was that it would cause their breasts to sag. Both of these are myths. Failure to produce milk can be reversed by feeding more often, and taking herbs to increase milk production. It rarely happens to women who feed on demand. And wearing tight bras [thus failing to exercise natural muscles] is one of the biggest culprits for saggy breasts.

In the United States, wealthier women who have received correct information about the benefits of breastfeeding are now more likely to breastfeed than lower income women.

In the Philippines, the wealthy are less likely to breastfeed than lower income women. The country is planning to intensify their efforts to encourage women to breastfeed for up to two years.

That breast milk is the best source of nutrition for newborns is one of the most clear-cut, non-debatable topics in health care. The benefits to the baby and the new mom are just enormous.

Breastfeeding rates in the United States fare better than the low rate of 16 percent in the Philippines, but there is still much room for improvement. According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) statistics, out of the women who gave birth in 2004, close to 74 percent initiated breastfeeding. This sounds like a fairly high number until you consider that this describes women who breastfed at all.

While any amount of breastfeeding is better than none, it is clearly to your advantage, and best for your baby's health, to breastfeed exclusively -- meaning no other food or water is supplemented – on demand for the first 6 months. When it comes to exclusive breastfeeding, here's what the CDC statistics reveal:

- Just over 30 percent of women breastfed exclusively for only 3 months

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- Only 11 percent of women breastfed exclusively even for 6 months

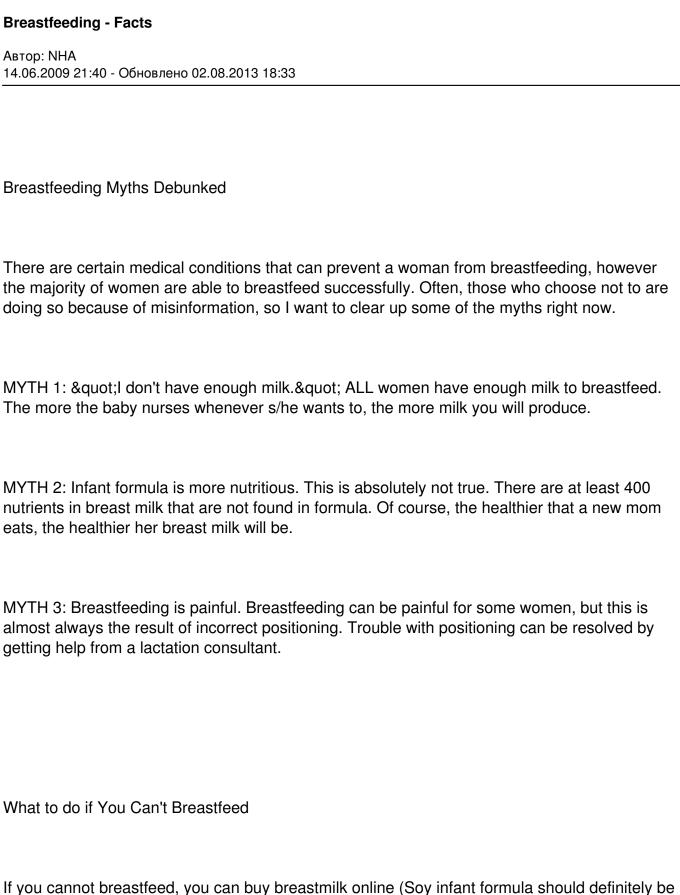
Ideally, you should strive to breastfeed your baby exclusively for the first 6 months, and only then begin to supplement with solid foods (while still continuing to breastfeed as well). Feeding should continue until the child no longer wants to (usually around age 4).

Why Breastfeeding is Best

What exactly does your baby stand to gain by being breastfed? Here are just some of the benefits that it provides to your child:

- All the immunities gained over your lifetime (and the immunities of anyone else who feeds your child)
  - Lower risk of respiratory tract and middle ear infections
  - Lower risk of eczema
  - Lower risk of obesity
  - Added protection against heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and allergies
  - Improved brain function and immune system function
  - Optimal nervous system & brain development for the child

Of course, there are benefits to mom too, as this article points out. The main ones are a reduced risk of chronic diseases like cancer, a faster return to your pre-pregnancy weight, better emotional stability, and increased bonding between you and your baby.



avoided.) Le Leche League is a terrific resource.

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