



Breastfeeding is healthy for our communities

protecting, promoting and
supporting public health.



Baby-Friendly
Newfoundland & Labrador

..... Breastfeeding is healthy for our communities

Breastfeeding is a public health priority in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although the breastfeeding rates in NL remain the lowest in the country, the number of families that are initiating breastfeeding is steadily growing.

Breastfeeding initiation rates in hospital have increased from one-third in the 1970's to over three-quarters in recent years.

While more families in our province are breastfeeding today, the majority do not meet Health Canada's recommendation of breastfeeding for 6 months and up to 2 years and beyond.

Supporting breastfeeding is an important part of creating healthy communities, everyone has a role to play in helping families reach their breastfeeding goals.

Baby-Friendly NL has a Toolkit for Municipalities which can help create environments where breastfeeding is promoted and supported as the normal way to feed infants and young children: <https://babyfriendlynl.ca/support/communities-municipalities/breastfeeding-toolkit-municipalities/>

Other resources by the Baby-Friendly Council of NL are located at www.babyfriendlynl.ca



Breastfeeding is healthy for infants and young children

providing safe, complete nutrition
anytime, anywhere.



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Newfoundland & Labrador

..... **Breastfeeding is healthy for infants and young children**

Health Canada recommends exclusive breastfeeding from birth to 6 months of age with continued breastfeeding for up to 2 years or more after introducing solid foods.

Every single drop of breastmilk counts. Just a teaspoon of breastmilk contains 3 million germ-killing cells. Colostrum (the first milk) is a powerhouse of nutrition and acts like the baby's first vaccination.

Breastmilk is easy to digest and has the right amount of protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins

and minerals for infants and young children. Breastmilk is a living fluid that changes to meet a babies' individual needs as they grow.

Infants that are breastfed have a lower risk of ear and lung infections, obesity, asthma, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and gastrointestinal infections such as diarrhea.

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Breastfeeding is healthy for the economy

reducing health care costs with fewer infections, hospital admissions and less sick time.



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..... **Breastfeeding is healthy for the economy**

Breastmilk contains antibodies and other immune factors that help protect babies against infections and disease. Studies have shown that breastfed infants and children have fewer emergency room visits which reduce health care costs.

Local research in Newfoundland and Labrador has shown that infants who had early exposure to formula experienced higher volumes of visits to family doctors, infectious episodes, hospital admissions and health care costs in the first year of life.

For mothers, breastfeeding provides protection against breast and ovarian cancer and safeguards against weaker bones later in life, further reducing health care costs.

Businesses that support their breastfeeding employees report increased job satisfaction, increased retention of experienced employees and reduction in sick time taken for children's illnesses.

Policies and programs that support breastfeeding should be prioritized, due to the significant human and economic burden associated with not breastfeeding.

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Breastfeeding is healthy for families

especially during times of
public health or
environmental emergencies.



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Breastfeeding during emergencies

Breastmilk is a free, safe, nutritious and accessible food source for infants and young children, ensuring food security during a pandemic, emergency or natural disaster.

An environmental emergency such as an extreme snow storm or hurricane may result in disruptions to basic services such as power or clean water. A breastfeeding mother requires no equipment to feed her baby and food is readily available anytime, anywhere.

Breastmilk contains hormones that lower stress levels in both the mother and the infant, providing comfort and relief during uncertain times.

Supporting mother-baby togetherness allows unlimited breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact, which ensures that all needs are met during an emergency.

In every emergency, it is necessary to assess and act to protect and support the nutritional needs and care of both breastfed and non-breastfed infants and young children.

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A photograph of two women sitting on a dark leather couch. The woman on the right is breastfeeding a baby. Both women are smiling and looking at each other. The image has a semi-transparent reddish-pink overlay.

Breastfeeding is healthy for women

lowering the risk of breast and ovarian cancers.



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..... **Breastfeeding is healthy for women**

Breastfeeding plays a vital role in women's reproductive health, rights, justice and social, economic and health inequities.

Breastfeeding causes hormonal changes that may delay the return of menstruation and provides women an opportunity for family planning.

The immune pathways that are established through breastfeeding could decrease the risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding also lowers the risk for high blood pressure and Type 2 Diabetes.

Breastfeeding is protective of maternal mental health, reducing the risk of postpartum depression and other post-natal mood disorders.

Social support, including mother-to-mother and/or peer-to-peer support, helps women meet their breastfeeding goals.

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Breastfeeding is healthy for the planet

natural, sustainable and
environmentally safe.



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..... **Breastmilk is healthy for the planet**

Breastmilk is a natural resource, it is environmentally safe and green because it is produced and delivered without pollution, packaging or waste.

We can all do something to minimize our carbon footprint starting with how we feed our infants and young children.

The infant formula industry leaves a major ecological footprint. From production and transportation to packaging and preparation, this industry uses large amounts of energy, fuel, water, cleaning agents and plastic.

Breastfeeding helps the transition to a low-carbon economy from one based on fossil fuels.

No electricity is needed to produce breastmilk and it requires no fuel for transport, thus reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas.

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**Breastfeeding is
healthy for the budget**
helping with household food security.



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..... **Breastfeeding is healthy for the budget**

Breastmilk is free and it is the first food for the majority of babies in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Breastfeeding supports improved food security for families, especially during the first 6 months of life when it is the only source of nutrition.

By breastfeeding infants and young children, family resources can be directed away from purchasing infant formula to support other food needs in the household.

Breastfed infants can save a family's time and money by avoiding health care costs, lost work, time and reduced hospital visits.

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Breastfeeding is healthy for parents

creating a nurturing connection and promoting healthy attachments.



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..... **Breastfeeding is healthy for parents**

Breastfeeding helps form a physical and emotional bond between parent and baby.

Research shows that the support of parents and grandparents and access to peer support can impact a mother's decision to breastfeed, as well as how long they breastfeed.

The period after birth is often referred to as the fourth trimester. During this time, breastfeeding helps establish a system of trust and creates a positive connection that helps meet the physical and mental needs of parent and baby.

Skin-to-skin contact helps establish breastfeeding and helps regulate baby's body temperature, blood sugar and blood pressure. Breastfeeding can help support healing from generational, cultural and individual trauma.

Following the babies' cues to breastfeed helps parents' gain confidence and fosters a close connection with their baby. Breastfeeding releases hormones necessary in reducing stress and coping with life's challenges.

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