

Breastfeeding: THE Best Investment

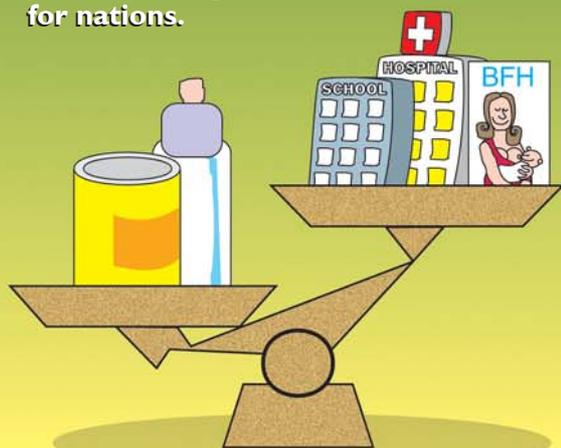
Households can save, not only on the purchase price of infant formula and commercial baby foods, but on the equipment, fuel and time required for preparation and clean-up.



Employers whose policies and facilities support the needs for breastfeeding will have more loyal workers who less often miss work to care for sick babies.



Savings in scarce foreign exchange and reduced burdens on health care facilities make breastfeeding promotion a good investment for nations.



Costs of Breastfeeding

- ✓ costs in extra food for the mother
- ✓ costs to provide working mothers with adequate maternity entitlements such as paid leave and child-care facilities at the workplace
- ✓ costs to provide breastfeeding education and sustain voluntary breastfeeding organisations such as mother-to-mother support groups

Costs of Artificial Feeding

Artificial feeding (refers to feeding infants with breastmilk substitutes) costs billions of dollars to institutions, nations, governments, health care organizations and families.

Health care

Artificial feeding in the infant's first year is associated with:

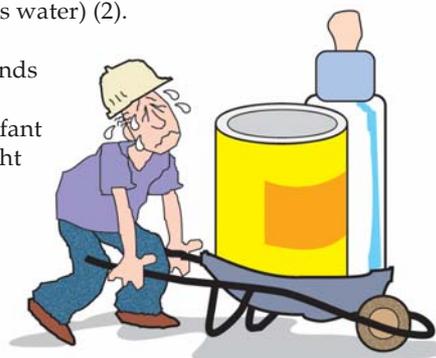
- ✓ more diarrhoea than in breastfed infants
- ✓ more respiratory infections
- ✓ more meningitis
- ✓ more ear infections
- ✓ increased allergies
- ✓ more chronic digestive disorders and dental/orthopedic problems
- ✓ more diabetes
- ✓ more learning difficulties and delayed development
- ✓ more hospitalization
- ✓ in many countries, malnutrition and increased death rates from diluted formula, unsafe water and poor hygiene

Households

Families pay for infant formula and other breastmilk substitutes, feeding and sterilizing equipment, fuel, and for health care associated with diarrhoea and other illnesses.

Formula also takes time to purchase, to prepare and to administer. In many rural areas it takes hours every day to collect water (a three month old infant needs over three litres of water a day for mixing and boiling) and wood (it takes 200 grams of wood to boil this water) (2).

An Argentinean who spends US\$50 per month to purchase infant formula could have bought 15 kg of meat, 75 kg of oranges, or 50 kg of vegetables for his or her family with that same money.



Companies

Artificially fed babies are sick much more often and for longer periods than breastfed babies. Hence working mothers who do not breastfeed are away from work more frequently. In contrast, corporate breastfeeding support programs in the USA resulted in a 27% decrease in absenteeism and a 36% decrease in health care costs (3).