

An 18-year-old woman comes to the pediatrician with her 3-day-old daughter for her first newborn visit and has questions about breastfeeding. She has been breastfeeding exclusively, but says that it is painful and believes that she is not producing enough milk. She would like to stop breastfeeding and switch to formula. Which of the following statements regarding breastfeeding is correct?

- ☐ A. Breastfeeding is associated with increased risk of obesity in the infant
- ☐ B. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of endometrial cancer in the mother
- ☐ C. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of otitis media in the infant
- ☐ D. Nutritional supplementation is not needed with exclusive breastfeeding
- ☐ E. There is no need for contraception with exclusive breastfeeding

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- ☐ A. Breastfeeding is associated with increased risk of obesity in the infant [0%]
- ☐ B. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of endometrial cancer in the mother [15%]
- ☒ C. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of otitis media in the infant [75%]
- ☐ D. Nutritional supplementation is not needed with exclusive breastfeeding [5%]
- ☐ E. There is no need for contraception with exclusive breastfeeding [4%]

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Explanation:

User Id: [redacted]

Breastfeeding benefits & contraindications		
	Benefits	Contraindications
Maternal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More rapid uterine involution & decreased postpartum bleeding• Faster return to prepartum weight• Improved child spacing• Improved maternal-infant bonding• Reduced risk of breast & ovarian cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active untreated tuberculosis (mothers may breastfeed after 2 weeks of anti-tuberculin therapy)• Maternal HIV infection (in developed countries where formula is readily available)• Herpetic breast lesions• Varicella infection <5 days prior to or within 2 days of delivery• Specific maternal medications• Chemotherapy or ongoing radiation therapy• Active abuse of street drugs or alcohol

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Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved immunity • Improved gastrointestinal function • Prevention of infectious diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Otitis media ◦ Gastroenteritis ◦ Respiratory illnesses ◦ Urinary tract infections • Decreased risk of childhood cancer, type I diabetes mellitus & necrotizing enterocolitis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galactosemia

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Breast milk is the ideal form of nutrition for the first 6 months of life, and **exclusive breastfeeding** is strongly recommended. Breastfeeding has a myriad of advantages both for the mother and infant; however, there are circumstances in which breastfeeding is contraindicated.

Of the answer choices, the only correct statement is that breastfed infants have lower rates of otitis media (as well as gastrointestinal, urinary tract, and respiratory infections). Other infant benefits include improved overall immunity and reduced risk of chronic diseases such as type I diabetes mellitus and cancer. For these reasons, mothers should be encouraged to exclusively breastfeed their infants until age 6 months. This mother should be counseled on this information and techniques to make breastfeeding more comfortable. A visit with a lactation consultant may be helpful for her.

(Choice A) Preliminary data suggest that breastfeeding reduces rather than increases the risk of childhood obesity.

(Choice B) Although breastfeeding reduces the risk of both ovarian and breast cancer, it does not affect the risk of developing endometrial cancer.

(Choice D) Although formula supplementation is not required, exclusively breastfed infants do require supplementation with vitamin D until solid foods are introduced into the diet at age 6 months.

(Choice E) Breastfeeding does increase the duration of postpartum anovulation. However, breastfeeding alone is not a reliable form of contraception, and breastfeeding mothers who wish to avoid pregnancy should be counseled to use another type of contraception.

Educational objective:

Breastfed infants have a decreased risk of developing otitis media; respiratory, gastrointestinal, and urinary tract infections; and necrotizing enterocolitis. Breastfed infants also have lower rates of type I diabetes mellitus and childhood cancer. The only absolute infant contraindication to breastfeeding is galactosemia.

References:

1. [Breastfeeding and the use of human milk.](#)
2. [Management of mastitis in breastfeeding women.](#)
3. [Breast milk jaundice: natural history, familial incidence and late neurodevelopmental outcome of the infant.](#)

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