母乳餵哺—寶寶的第一道疫苗劑

「每個初生嬰兒降生到這充滿細菌和傳染病的世界，所能擁有最強的防禦乃來自於初乳。這種在母親產後數天內所分泌的物質，提供予寶寶的就彷如他的第一道疫苗劑。」（聯合國兒童基金會一九九二年）

餵哺母乳對母子在多方面都有許多好處，母乳對健康的諸多裨益亦早已經多方面的考證，這包括：

- 預防消化及呼吸系統的疾病，例如中耳炎（Aniansson 1994）。
- 預防非消化系統的感染性疾病和免疫失調（Cunningham et al 1991）。

除了確保嬰兒期的健康之外，餵哺母乳還可以：

- 減低產生過敏的機會 (Chandra 1989) 以及
- 減低嬰兒在成長後染上某種疾病的機會，這些疾病包括乳癌 (Newcomb 1994)、骨質疏鬆症 (Kritz-Silverstein 1992)、糖尿病 (Gerstein 1994)、潰瘍性腸炎及克隆氏病〈譯註：局部性迴腸炎〉 (Rigas 1993) 等等。

初乳，也就是最早期的母乳，乃一種特別適合初生嬰兒的營養濃縮液，有助初生嬰兒對抗感染，皆因它含有一整列的：

- 免疫球蛋白
- 白血球及
- 各種抗發炎因子 (Goldman 1993)

母乳中所含豐富的免疫球蛋白A (IgA) 已被證實可大幅減少吃母乳的嬰兒患上急性腸胃炎的機會。根據美國公衛期刊 (American Journal of Public Health, Koopman1985) 的一項研究指出，吃配方奶的嬰兒患上急性腸胃炎的機會，乃餵哺母乳嬰兒的六倍。

另一項更令人驚訝的發現是，母乳中所含的免疫球蛋白A還可刺激嬰兒本身免疫系統的發展 (Cruz 1989)。因此嬰兒不單只有來自母乳中免疫球蛋白A的保護，還有自己腸胃 (gastrointestinal tract) 所製造的免疫球蛋白的保護 (Koutras1989)。這種對嬰兒本身免疫系統的早期刺激，於他們長大後在預防各種疾病方面可能有著深遠的影響 (Davis 1988, Schwartzbaum 1991)。

另一個有關疫苗劑的重大發現是，母乳餵哺的嬰兒對防疫注射有較良好的反應，他們產生的抗體比起吃配方奶的嬰兒來說，也明顯地高出許多 (Zoppi 1983, Pabst 1989, Hahn-Zoric 1990)。

母乳所提供予寶寶抵抗疾病的能力，乃無法以任何其他方式複製的。

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Breastfeeding

Baby's First Immunization

"Born into a world teeming with germs and infections, a newborn's strongest defense comes from colostrum, the substance produced in the first few days after birth, which provides the baby's first immunization." (UNICEF, 1992)

Breastfeeding offers advantages for both babies and mothers in many ways, and the overwhelming health benefits of human milk are well-documented. These include:

- the prevention of gastrointestinal and respiratory illness and infections, such as otitis media (Aniansson 1994).
- nongastrointestinal infections and immunologic disorders (Cunningham et al 1991).

In addition to improved health during infancy, breastfeeding has been found

- to reduce the incidence of allergy (Chandra 1989) and
- to reduce the frequency of certain diseases later in life, including breast cancer (Newcomb 1994), osteoporosis (Kritz-Silverstein 1992), diabetes (Gerstein 1994), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's Disease (Rigas 1993).

Colostrum, which is the first milk produced, is a concentrated form of nutrition specifically suited to a newborn's needs. It also protects a newborn against infection with a wide array of :

- immunoglobulins,
- leukocytes, and
- anti-inflammatory factors (Goldman 1993).

The abundance of secretory immunoglobulin A (IgA) has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of acute gastrointestinal illnesses in breastfed babies. According to a study in the American Journal of Public Health (Koopman 1985), "The risk of acute gastrointestinal illness in infants receiving formula was six times greater than in infants receiving breastmilk."

Even more amazing is the fact that the presence of IgA in human milk has been found to stimulate the infant's own immunologic development (Cruz 1989). Therefore the baby is protected not only by the IgA in his mother's milk, but by the immunoglobulins produced in his own gastrointestinal tract (Koutras 1989). This early stimulation of the baby's own immune system may have far-reaching effects on protecting the baby from disease in later life (Davis 1988, Schwartzbaum 1991).

Another significant finding in regard to immunization is that breastfed babies showed a better response to vaccines with significantly higher antibody levels than formula-fed babies (Zoppi 1983, Pabst 1989, Hahn-Zoric 1990).

The resistance to disease that human milk provides to babies cannot be duplicated in any other way.

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