

Hola Roberta,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your experienced opinions with the readers of Babog.org. We really appreciate your point of view.

About Milk:

1. First thing, breast milk or formula milk?

Breast milk of course!

2. Why?

Breast milk has many advantages for babies, mothers and the environment.

Human milk is for human babies.

Why breast milk is best for your baby...

- Breast milk is the most natural food for your baby.
- Breast milk contains extra beneficial ingredients not present in formula milk.
- Breast milk helps your baby's brain to develop.
- Breast milk reduces your baby's risk of developing allergies.
- Breast milk is particularly good for premature and ill babies.
- Babies who are *not* breastfed are more likely to get chest, ear and tummy infections. They are also more likely to develop diabetes, obesity and heart disease in later life.

How breastfeeding benefits the mother...

- Breast milk is ready to feed and is free – formula milk has to be bought and prepared.
- Breastfeeding helps mothers return to their pre-pregnancy shape.
- Breastfeeding helps mothers bond with their baby and helps their physical and emotional well-being.
- Breastfeeding gives mothers some protection against breast and ovarian cancer as well as brittle bones (osteoporosis) in later life.

Breastfeeding is also good for the environment, as it requires no extra equipment or treatment and involves no packaging or waste.

3. Until when?

I'm not sure if Spanish Department of Health has adopted the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendaion that for the first 6 months, the only food you give your baby is breast milk; and from six months to two years or beyond, you continue breastfeeding while giving your baby suitable other food from a spoon. This way of feeding is the best way to make sure your baby develops well and stays healthy.

4. Milk on demand or every 3 hours?

Usually best to allow baby led feeding, assuming the baby does feed regularly, has plenty of wet and dirty nappies and grows appropriately. Babies have different feeding patterns – some prefer smaller more frequent feeds, others may prefer larger feeds less often. Feeding patterns can also vary at different times of the day and on different days.

5. What about expressing? Does the expressed milk have the same benefits than the non expressed one?

Most of the beneficial factors are also available in expressed breast milk. However, if expressed breast milk is stored some of the factors can be affected (reduced). If using expressed milk, try to give freshly expressed breast milk in preference to refrigerated milk, which you should give in preference to frozen milk.

6. There is controversy about cow milk, its benefits and its secondary effects. What do you think about it?

Do you mean cow milk formula? If so, I think parents should be reassured if they choose to feed their baby formula milk....formula milk provides excellent nutrition for babies however it does not provide some of the extra beneficial ingredients found in breast milk.

Babies fed formula milk grow differently to breastfed babies and this is currently being studied to see if the difference in growth could explain some of the reasons why breastfed babies tend to have health advantages over babies fed formula milk.

I don't have much expertise with regard to concerns regarding factors in cow milk which may be a cause for concern, e.g. hormones etc...

7. Until when should we drink cow milk? We are the only mammals than drink another animal's milk all life long.

There is no recognised upper age limit for drinking cow milk. Many adults lose their ability to tolerate milk as they get older and so may limit their intake. However milk and milk products are a rich source of calcium which is essential for good health. Milk and milk products are also a good source of protein and other nutrients. For babies it is recommended that they receive breast milk or infant formula milk as their main milk drink until they are 1 year old. After that, 3 servings of dairy food is recommended in Ireland (I'm not sure if Spain follows the same recommendations). Dairy foods include milk as a drink or in foods, yogurt and cheese.

8. What about the continuation milk that pharmaceuticals and other companies sell, are they necessary?, are they any good?

'Follow-on' milks and 'growing-up' milks after the age of 1 year are not necessary if the child is eating a mixed diet that contains a balance of food from the food pyramid (assuming this is the model that is also used in Spain??). After the age of 1 year a balanced diet is a more appropriate source of the nutrients needed, than a formula milk.

Enlace a la entrevista en español:

<http://www.babog.org/2010/03/19/entrevista-a-la-experta-en-nutricion-roberta-mccarthy-i-sobre-la-leche/>