



There is a 1 in 7 lifetime risk of developing breast cancer for women in the UK. Additionally, having children later in life could also increase a woman's risk.

Breast cancer risk is reduced by 4.3% for every 12 months of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding can also reduce the risk of Triple-Negative Breast Cancer (20%) and in carriers of BRCA1 mutations (22–55%).

OUR BREASTFEEDING TIPS:

- ✓ Get in touch with local breastfeeding support groups.
- ✓ Call one of the advisors at the National Breastfeeding Helpline (phone: 0300 100 0212)
- ✓ Watch breastfeeding tutorials on YouTube from trustworthy sources (e.g. from the NHS “Your Introduction to Breastfeeding”).
- ✓ Have a well-balanced diet with extra fluids which helps to produce milk.
- ✓ Keep in touch with your midwife and express any concerns. Talk to friends and family if you're struggling.



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Prevention saves lives

**BREASTFEEDING
AND BREAST CANCER**



www.breastcanceruk.org.uk



KEY FACTS

- Breastfeeding reduces breast cancer risk; the longer a person breastfeeds the more their risk is reduced.
- The risk of breast cancer decreases by around 4% for every 12 months of breastfeeding.
- The UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world.
- Around 4.7% of breast cancer cases in the UK may be a result of not breastfeeding.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months. Afterwards, children should be given complementary foods alongside breast milk.

WHY DO WOMEN CHOOSE NOT TO BREASTFEED OR STOP BREASTFEEDING EARLY?

The UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world. According to an NHS survey, 81% of babies were breastfed at least once after birth. This percentage is low, in comparison to Australia (92%) and Sweden (98%). In the UK, the percentage of babies that are breastfed drops to 69% after one week and by 6 months is 34%.

Mothers may worry about the baby not getting enough milk or may experience nipple pain and difficulties with latching. Mothers may feel uncomfortable breastfeeding in public due to an absence of signposted breastfeeding public spaces. A lack of UK legislation on paid breaks to breastfeed, milk storage facilities, professional help or support from family and friends may also be factors.

WHAT EFFECT DOES BREASTFEEDING HAVE ON BREAST CANCER RISK?

A large study found that breastfeeding could decrease the risk of breast cancer by 4.3% for every 12 months of breastfeeding. This did not vary between high and low income countries or with age, menopausal status, ethnic group, or age of the mother at first birth.

Breastfeeding for more than one year reduces the risk of triple-negative breast cancer by around 20% and the risk in women with BRCA1 mutations by around 22-50%. In the UK, an estimated 4.7% of breast cancer cases are associated with not breastfeeding.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING FOR INFANTS AND MOTHERS?

Breastfeeding has many benefits for both you and your child. Babies who are breastfed have a reduced risk of death from infectious diseases, hospitalisation for diarrhoea, and fewer respiratory and ear infections.

Adults who were breastfed as children have a reduced risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Mothers who breastfeed have a reduced long-term risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, ovarian and breast cancer. A greater reduction of the risk is seen for longer periods of breastfeeding.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DURATION OF BREASTFEEDING?

The NHS and WHO recommend exclusively breastfeeding (breast milk only) for the first six months of the baby's life. Breastfeeding alongside solid food is recommended for babies from six months on. A mother and baby can carry on breastfeeding for as long as they like, and this continues to offer health benefits.

