Breastfeeding vs. Formula Feeding

BREASTFEEDING
ADVANTAGES: Human milk is a perfect balance of nutrients. It contains substances to help resist infection, mature the lining of the gut, assist with digestion and reduce the chance of allergy. When the baby nurses, a hormone called oxytocin causes the uterus to contract, reducing bleeding and shrinking the uterus back to its normal size. Milk production uses fat that accumulated during pregnancy, speeding weigh loss. Breast milk is free and requires no preparation or storage. Breastfed infant stools have no odor and do not stain. Many mothers find breastfeeding relaxing, restful, and rewarding.

DISADVANTAGES: Some nipple tenderness may occur for a few days due to stretch by the infant’s sucking. Leaking of milk may occur until the supply balances the baby’s needs. Breastfed babies normally feed more often than formula fed babies because the milk is more quickly and completely digested. Parents cannot see how much breast milk the infant is taking and must rely on other signs of adequate nutrition such as infant satisfaction and weight gain. There are NO known disadvantages for the infant.

BREASTFEEDING WITH SUPPLEMENTATION
ADVANTAGES: Supplementation allows the baby to receive nutrients if he is not able to nurse, if the mother is temporarily unable to breastfeed, or if the mother is separated from the baby. Breast milk may be manually expressed or pumped for supplements, or formula may be used.

DISADVANTAGES: Skipped feedings without manually expressing or pumping can cause breast engorgement and a reduction in milk supply. Formula supplementation can affect the baby’s appetite so that he/she does not nurse well. It is well established that giving artificial nipples (including pacifiers) before breastfeeding can cause nipple confusion. Unnecessary supplementation with formula exposes the infant to the possibility of allergic reaction.

FORMULA FEEDING
ADVANTAGES: Nutrient content of formula is as close to breast milk as manufacturers can make it. Formula feeding allows others to assume feeding tasks. Some mothers find formula feeding less inhibiting or embarrassing. Parents can see the amount of formula taken in by the infant. Formula fed babies usually feed less often than breastfed babies because the formula is less completely digested and stays in the baby’s stomach longer.

DISADVANTAGES: No formula matches the ideal balance of nutrients contained in breast milk. Formulas LACK substances that help resist infection, mature the gut, aid in digestion, and resist allergy. Formula is expensive and formula feeding requires bottle sanitation, formula preparation, and refrigeration. Formula fed infant stools have an odor and may stain diapers. Maternal breast engorgement and leaking can occur in spite of medication to suppress milk production.