

HEALTH MATTERS

Breastfeeding (Lactational Amenorrhea Method)

What is breastfeeding as birth control?

Breastfeeding can be used as a highly effective form of temporary birth control. You can use this method for the first 6 months after giving birth by only nursing your baby from the breast (**no pumping**). This is called continuous breastfeeding.

How effective is breastfeeding as birth control?

Breastfeeding is very effective birth control. If continuous breastfeeding is always used, less than 1 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year. If continuous breastfeeding is not always used, 2 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year.

If you use this method, you should:

- Breastfeed your baby at least every 4 hours during the day.
- Breastfeed your baby every 6 hours at night.

Breastfeeding is only a temporary method of birth control. Once you get your period again, breastfeeding is no longer a reliable form of preventing pregnancy.

How does it work?

While you are breastfeeding continuously, your body doesn't make a hormone needed to release an egg. Pregnancy cannot happen if an egg is not released.

What are the benefits of using breastfeeding as birth control?

- Breastfeeding is free, simple, and convenient.
- Breast milk is the best nutrition for your baby.

What are the downsides of using breastfeeding as birth control?

- Breastfeeding does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Some women find it difficult to only feed their baby breast milk.
- This birth control method only works for about 6 months. After 6 months, you will need to find another method of birth control.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on breastfeeding as birth control, talk to your health care provider.

Compare breastfeeding to other birth control options using ARHP's Method Match at www.arhp.org/MethodMatch.