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.