

Breastfeeding the magical way to stay fit and healthy post delivery

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- Dr Anuradha Lokhare -

Weight loss issues especially after delivery of a baby has been a major area of concern for many new mothers. This new phase in their lives makes them face tremendous anxiety and stress due to the many changes their body undergoes coupled with reduced stamina, sleep deprivation, a complete change in their daily schedules and the stress of learning how to raise a child.

Not spoken about it very often, new mothers often face issues with latching, when the mother and child have found a 'good latch', the pair experience breastfeeding as a beautiful phenomenon. Cases where the child is unable to drink properly, the mother experiences sore nipples or discomfort while feeding. Quite often, mothers who are unable to find a good latch are demotivated and turn towards Formula Milk or bottle feeding, which ultimately affects the quality of nutrition for the child and as well denies the mother the many health benefits of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is the most natural phenomenon which has long-term health benefits for both mother and the child. While breast milk helps physical and mental growth of the child, it also provides immunity to the mother. Research shows that new mothers who exclusively breastfeed have lower risks of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, diabetes, reduces risks of cardiovascular diseases and osteoporosis later in their lives. Skipping the lactation phase could be most problematic for mothers in the future increasing their risks to the many cancers and decrease in bone density.

Breastfeeding is a gift that any mother can give to her child and herself. It not only secures the health of a mother but also the child. Breastfeeding allows a woman to burn calories every time she produces breast milk to nurse her child. Breastfeeding releases the hormone oxytocin which helps the uterus return to its

pre-pregnancy size and reduces uterine bleeding after birth. It is also a wonderful way to catch up on your sleep as most mothers get deep sleep soon after they feed the child which is much needed rest after the exhaustion that a mother goes through post-delivery.

Breastfeeding could be a bit difficult for new mothers as they face baby latching issues which make them apprehensive about child's health. Mid-wives would earlier be useful to help newer moms to breastfeed their babies. However, mothers today can opt for breast pumps which are equally useful to express milk which can be fed to babies that don't latch onto their breasts. Expressing milk through a breast pumps is a healthy way to feed the baby and also burn calories.

Breastfeeding is considered natural way of helping new moms lose their baby weight. Breastfeeding for 3-6 months may help lose more weight than formula-feeding or a combination of the two. Apart from providing nourishment and helping to protect your baby from getting sick, breastfeeding is beneficial for mothers including the potential to lose weight more quickly post-delivery.

During breast-feeding, focus on making healthy choices. Consume a variety of whole grains as well as fruits and vegetables, stay hydrated. If you are trying to lose weight, limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats like soft drinks, desserts, fried foods, cheese, and fatty meats. Moderate physical activity will help too in reduction of weight.

The activity of breastfeeding today has become a much more complex task due to the changing role of a woman in today's society. However, it needs to be reiterated that breastfeeding not only nurtures bonding between mother and child, but it is also a way for new mothers to shed those extra pounds. Mothers who make the choice to exclusively breastfeed and face issues with latching should consult a lactation consultant who will help her adjust her posture and diet to ensure adequate milk supply.

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