Benefits of Breastfeeding
By Amy McCarthy

Breast is best? But is it worth the trouble? The buzz around breastfeeding is constantly talking about how good it is for a new baby. Yet, on the other hand there are so many stories that are told about breastfeeding that could scare any new mom. Pregnant moms hear stories about how painful breastfeeding is, the baby never sleeps and that it ruins her breasts. There are so many myths and truths about breastfeeding floating around that it is hard for anyone to know the difference. The truth is there are many positives to breastfeeding and there can be challenges that come up as well.

There are many benefits to breastfeeding and the benefits last a lifetime for your baby. Breastfeeding lowers the risk of obesity, diabetes and even SIDS. All of these are current issues that new parents must worry about. Considering obesity, and diabetes in children is becoming more and more common it is important for new moms to know what they can do early on to prevent it. And SIDS is always a scary one for new moms since so little is known about it. It is great that research does show that breastfeeding lowers the risk.

Besides just the long term benefits there are some perks to breastfeeding even during the first year. One is that babies get sick less often when they are breastfed. This is a great benefit to moms that go to school or work because they do not need to take as much time off to stay home with the baby. It is very common for babies that are bottle fed to have chronic ear infections for example. Breastfeeding also helps moms return back to their pre-pregnancy weight faster. It allows for the natural process of losing weight to occur after a baby. However be patient moms, it took some time to gain baby weight so it takes some time to lose it too!

Another benefit worth mentioning is how cheap it is to breastfeed. Formula is very expensive and babies eat a lot! Even programs like WIC that help with the cost of formula are only supplemental which means you will still be buying formula on your own.

Breastfeeding is convenient! It is always ready when babies are hungry. Waking up every two hours to heat water and make a bottle with formula gets exhausting. It is much easier to hear a baby, nurse the baby and go right back to sleep without having to fumble around in the kitchen at midnight and at 2:00 AM and at 4:00 AM, and you get the idea.
Yet there are many horror stories that moms hear about breastfeeding from friends, family and even movies. I will explain some common breastfeeding myths that you might hear. Breastfeeding is painful is a very common thing for pregnant moms to hear. So to clarify this myth. It is possible for breastfeeding to be painful, but it is not supposed to be. For example it can be painful if a baby is not latching on the right way. If for anytime you feel pain while breastfeeding ask for help, call a local WIC program, your baby’s pediatrician or your OB/GYN. If you call as soon as you feel pain it is much easier to fix whatever is causing it. You by no means need to suffer through the pain until you are ready to wean. Breastfeeding pain is a fixable problem.

Another common myth is that breastfeeding ruins a new mom’s breasts. I am sorry to say that it is the hormones from pregnancy that change your breast not breastfeeding. Your body gets ready to make breast milk whether you use it or not. Therefore the changes have already happened.

Breastfed babies are very needy and wake more frequently is another breastfeeding myth. I can understand new moms wanting to get as much sleep as possible, but I am sad to say that formula feeding does not solve this problem. Baby’s stomachs are very small therefore they can digest breast milk or formula very quickly. Even though it is hard it is actually a good sign that a baby wakes up every 2 hours because they need to be checked on frequently.

It can be very overwhelming to have a new baby. Especially when everyone you know wants to give advice, the good and the bad. Be patient with yourself and your baby. You are getting to know each other. Breastfeeding is a great way to get to do just that. You are learning to breastfeed and your new baby is learning as well. There will bumps in the road but overcoming those bumps together will help you grow as a mother. It will be reassuring to know that you are giving your new baby the best start possible and if they could they would thank you!