

BABY BASICS

Protecting Children's Health

(NAPSA)—One way mothers can enhance their child's health is with the nutritional benefits of breastmilk. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that moms breastfeed exclusively for at least the first six months of a baby's life. Continued research has shown many positive health benefits for babies, including:

- **Providing optimal nutrition**—Breastmilk is the most natural and nutritious way to encourage your baby's optimal development.

- **Helping immune system development**—While the baby's immune system matures, breastmilk protects the baby throughout development from viral, bacterial and parasitic infections. Research shows that babies fed breastmilk have fewer and shorter episodes of illness.

- **Protecting against some allergies**—Breastmilk delays the onset of hereditary allergic disease and lowers the risk of developing allergic disease.

- **Breastmilk helps prevent babies from developing some diseases**—It protects against developing chronic diseases such as celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma and childhood cancers.

People often think of breastmilk as an unchanging liquid, whose composition is consistent, much like formula. This thinking is untrue—breastmilk changes all the time. It is different in the morning, in the evening and in the beginning or middle of a feed, and changes further as the baby



grows and develops.

“Breastmilk is the ultimate conversion artist,” says Leon Mitoulas, head of breastfeeding research at Medela, Inc. “It always delivers just the right amount of energy. It contains more calories in the first few weeks after birth, when the baby grows very quickly; then less as growth slows down. Later, when the baby needs more energy to crawl and learn to walk, milk again becomes more energetic.”

The proportion of breastmilk components—such as fats, sugars, proteins and cells that protect the baby and help it build its own protective immune system—varies continuously.

“Breastmilk is the most extraordinary of liquids—it nourishes, protects and supports development, all the while adapting itself to the exact needs of the baby at any given time,” adds Mitoulas.

For more information about the benefits of breastmilk, visit www.medelabreastfeedingus.com.