



Standard 1: Breastfeed exclusively for the first six months

Exclusive breastfeeding means that no other food or liquid - even water - is given in addition to nursing at the breast.

This standard is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, and most major health organizations. The newest research actually shows that waiting until at least six months before offering solid food is best for baby's health. Babies often get their first tooth and are starting to sit up unassisted at around six months old, so it seems waiting until six months is the way nature intended. Also, following nature is one way we glorify our Creator.

By waiting to introduce solids until six months, you give your baby's digestive system the necessary amount of time to mature. Also, exclusive breastfeeding encourages the growth of all the wonderful probiotics your baby needs. Researchers looked at the guts of formula-fed babies versus exclusively breastfed babies and found a distinctive difference between the types of bacteria that colonized each baby's gut (*The Baby Book, Revised and Updated Edition 2013*, p.212).

Sometimes a new mother cannot imagine breastfeeding for so long. However, once the breastfeeding relationship is well established around six weeks of age, nursing often becomes easier and more enjoyable. These same women who couldn't imagine nursing until six months often cannot imagine stopping once the six month mark arrives!