



Dear Parent:

On behalf of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) staff, we welcome you to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Because there is a chance that you will deliver your baby early, we want to help you prepare for this possibility. Premature babies differ in many ways from full term babies. In this letter, we are focusing on their unique nutritional needs. **Breast milk has many advantages over formula, especially for premature babies.** As part of giving your baby the best possible care, we are asking you to make every effort to provide your breast milk, even if you do not intend to breastfeed. Breast milk produced by mothers of premature infants is specially designed to meet many of their babies' needs. Any breast milk – even in small amounts - is beneficial for your baby's health.

Breast milk has been shown to have many benefits over formula for all babies- not just those born premature. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies, with rare exceptions, receive only breast milk for the first six months of life and that they continue to receive breast milk, along with other foods, until at least one year of age. Our nurses and lactation consultants will help you establish a pumping routine and plan for building a milk supply, while providing support and guidance around infant feeding and lactation. We encourage **pumping within 6 hours after delivery.**

The benefits of mothers' own milk include the following:

- fewer infections
- lower rates of allergies
- lower rates of obesity
- improved developmental outcomes
- better feeding tolerance
- fewer bowel complications

If you were not planning to breastfeed, we urge you to consider pumping breast milk for your baby unless there is a medical reason that prevents the use of your breast milk for your baby. If your baby is ready to feed and your milk is not available, then we will discuss other feeding options with you.

We look forward to getting to know you and your baby. If you have any questions, please ask your nurse to contact us and/or our team of lactation consultants.

Sincerely,

The NICU Physicians