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Psychological Benefits of Breastfeeding

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Psychological Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding offers numerous benefits for both the mother and child. According to Westerfield et al. (2018), various studies have shown that breastfeeding contributes to cognitive development, social skills, and overall well-being for both mother and child. Although breastfeeding has numerous nutritional and health benefits for the mother and child and protection against diseases, such as breast and ovarian cancer, it also has psychological benefits. This document discusses the various psychological benefits of breastfeeding for both the mother and child.

Various psychological benefits arise from breastfeeding. The first is positive infant-mother attachment. Breastfeeding promotes positive infant-mother attachment (Potts, 2019). During the first and second stages of breast milk supply, the mother's hormonal levels promote a maternal attitude of comfort with her infant; this translates into comfort with and trust in the infant. More than any other moment in the relationship between a mother and child, breastfeeding is characterized by mutuality. Both mother and child form an emotional connection that continues throughout the relationship (Potts, 2019). Besides, breastfeeding is associated with favorable mother-infant pairings. Breastfeeding and mother care is associated with excellent stability, security, reduced conflict and violence, and a willingness to stay in the relationship.

Another psychological benefit is the regulation of mood. Breastfed infants show more resilience to stress and have a better sense of stability. Some of the reasons behind this are the hormone oxytocin released during breastfeeding and mothers breastfeeding their babies for a healthy duration and not just on demand. Krol and Grossmann (2018) support that the hormone oxytocin, produced in the brain by mothers while breastfeeding, helps to regulate mood by causing feelings of calmness, security, and well-being.

Besides, a more positive self-image is beneficial because it connects a mother to her infant and reminds her of her bond with her child. Breastfeeding also makes mothers feel fitter, healthier, and more attractive. When a mother decides to breastfeed her baby, she chooses to give a gift that she believes will bring joy into her child's life (Potts, 2019). Feeding the baby is an important and excellent opportunity to connect with them deeply. All of the challenges associated with the experience are worth it if the mother derives true enjoyment from caring for the baby and seeing the positive effects on their development. Therefore, breastfeeding the newborn results in increased self-esteem and self-image in both mother and child.

Furthermore, breastfeeding reduces stress and depression. Breastfeeding decreases stress and depression by helping to regulate the mother's nervous system. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduction of stress and anxiety through the mother's relaxation (Husada, 2021). It also helps relieve stress and depression in babies by enabling them to bond with their mothers, reducing the perceived separation that often causes postpartum depression. Breastfeeding also helps moms get a good night's sleep and feel better, giving them more energy to be a parent and return to work or school. This results in fewer symptoms of eating disorders and even a decrease in anxiety.

In conclusion, in addition to the physical benefits of breastfeeding, there are numerous psychological benefits for both mother and child. Breastfeeding is a visual companion for a baby and communicates to a mother that she provides nourishment and protection. It has been shown that women who breastfeed their babies experience various psychological benefits, including increased self-esteem, less anxiety, stress, and depression.

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