

Breastfeeding and Attachment



children both during the day and night.

Much of the literature that promotes breastfeeding, focuses on the physical benefits of breast feeding, particularly the transfer of nutrients and immunity, but breastfeeding also has a critical significant role in attachment, early brain development and healthy child development overall. The recently cited role of breastfeeding as a protective factor against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), may be because breast-feeding involves increased interactivity and attentiveness to

The hormones oxytocin and prolactin, present in breastfeeding mothers, have an opiate effect on mothers and infants. Oxytocin is required for attachment in animals and in humans it also plays a role in building attachment (Small 1998).

Breastfeeding is not only for feeding a child. It can also calm, soothe, relax, and demonstrate love for child (Granju and Kennedy 1999).

Breastfeeding is an attachment practice – an important practice that parents can use to develop a deep and lasting connection with their child and to respond to their child's needs. It is one way for a mother to nurture an infant by responding to his/her attachment behaviours. It promotes secure attachment because while breastfeeding, a mother is available, in tune with the needs of her child, showing affection, demonstrating pleasure in the interaction, and comforting her child.

- Breastfeeding is important during the '**Undiscriminating Responses**' phase of attachment, that typically lasts from 0-3 months. It is during this phase that the infant's brain is trying to organize and control physiological states and behaviour. The attachment figure can help the infant's brain to regulate the body by responding to these messages in comforting and appropriate ways, such as breastfeeding, when the infant communicates hunger (Crisci, Kussin, and Mayer 1999).
- Breastfeeding is also important during the '**Discriminating Behaviour**' phase of attachment, which lasts from 3-6 months, when the infant begins to associate the meeting of

