What Breastfeeding Parents Need to Know about Formula Use

We have learned that it’s best to give only breast milk – no extra formula or water for healthy full term babies, unless there is a medical need to do so. Here are some of the reasons we encourage you to breastfeed exclusively in the hospital whenever this is possible.

**Formula is not the same as breast milk and can make it harder to breastfeed**

**Allergy**
- Formula increases the risk of serious allergy to cow’s milk protein or other food allergies later.
- Formula increases the risk of serious asthma, eczema, and other autoimmune diseases.

**Changing the gut**
- Formula changes the baby’s gut flora, increasing the chance of bowel infection and diarrhea.
- It may take up to one month after formula is given for the baby’s gut to return to normal.

**Infection**
Baby is best protected from infection when nothing but breast milk is fed. Even one dose of formula weakens this protection.

**Undigested protein**
Breast milk protein is easier to digest for baby. Cow’s milk protein is harder to digest and can lead to gas and discomfort in the baby.

**Kidney overload**
Formula is based on cow’s milk and contains much higher loads of minerals than human milk. The baby’s kidney has to work hard to eliminate fluid and body wastes.

**Engorgement**
Formula feeding means less breastfeeding and milk taken from the breast. This can lead to hard and painful breasts when the milk ‘comes in’ (the volume increases).

**Bottle nipples and pacifiers nipples – nipple confusion**
- Bottle nipples or pacifiers don’t feel like the breast. They can change the way baby uses the tongue, making latching harder, or making mother sore.
- The instant rapid flow from a bottle can confuse baby. At the breast, babies may refuse to latch on, or pull off and cry, or even after just 1 or 2 bottles.

**Milk supply problems later**
- When baby is fed formula instead of breast milk, it takes longer for your milk to ‘come in’ (increase in volume).
- The milk supply may not fully develop in the first weeks after birth.
- Some women find it difficult to have enough milk if baby was given formula in the first days after birth.