

Benefits of Breastfeeding - Class for Teens

This is a synopsis of a class we did at an alternative school for at-risk teenage girls. Most of these girls were not pregnant- they were in the midst of the 'Baby Think It Over' project, where they learn about parenting by caring for computerized baby dolls. We stayed at the school all day and talked to all of the girls at the school in small groups of 5-10. I took a newborn-size baby doll to class and carried it in a sling the entire time. We got very good feedback on the class from the students and the teacher.

After introductions, we offered the girls two plates of cookies (one homemade and one store-bought) and asked each girl to get only one cookie since we only had a limited amount. Once everyone had a cookie, we asked whether they chose homemade or store-bought, and asked why they made their choice. We used the reasons they gave for their cookie choice to discuss reasons that moms choose breastfeeding vs. formula feeding. We then passed around a basket of items, where each item represented a benefit of breastfeeding. The girls guessed what each item represented, and we discussed the benefit of breastfeeding that was represented by each item. At some point in each class, the subject of breastfeeding in public would come up – as we discussed this (usually with lurid stories from at least one girl about someone they saw expose their breasts completely to breastfeed), I would casually adjust my shirt under the sling and “latch” the baby doll (continuing my discussion the entire time). Once I had done this, I asked the girls whether anyone had noticed that I was “nursing” my baby now (at most someone had noticed me adjusting the sling). We would then discuss how easy it is to nurse discreetly, and talked about our state laws that protect a mom’s right to breastfeed in public, even if the entire breast is exposed in the process. We answered questions throughout the class, and provided a *Benefits of Breastfeeding* handout at the end.

Following is a list of each item we used in the basket, followed by the benefit the item represents.

For the basket items, look around your house. I used toy versions of many of these items (lion, money, stethoscope, otoscope, dollhouse bed, matchbox car). I made a mock report card (with all A's, of course!) on my computer. If you can't find an item, print out a picture from the internet or make up your own variation. See the *Benefits of Breastfeeding* handout for details on each specific benefit.

Female lion.....	Breastfeeding builds mom's self-confidence.
Clock	Breastfeeding saves time.
Money.....	Breastfeeding saves money.
Stethoscope	Breastfed babies and their mothers are healthier throughout life.
Otoscope	Breastfed babies have fewer ear infections.
Allergy Medication Box.....	Breastfed babies have fewer allergies.
Toothbrush	Breastfed babies have better dental health.
Report Card.....	Breastfeeding allows baby to reach his/her full IQ potential.
Bed.....	Breastfeeding helps mom rest and relax.
Clothespin	The diapers and spit up of breastfed babies don't smell bad.
White Baby Outfit	A breastfed baby's spit-up doesn't stain clothing.
Glue.....	Breastfeeding promotes bonding.
Car.....	Going out is easier with breastfed babies.
Tape Measure	Breastfeeding helps mom get her body back.
Rubber Glove	Breastfeeding gives mom an extra free hand.
Home pregnancy test box	Breastfeeding helps to space babies.
Sanitary napkin box.....	Breastfeeding usually delays mom's period for many months.
Green Lego (or anything else green)	Breastfeeding is “Green” (environmentally friendly).