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Outcomes of human milk-fed premature infants.

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Abstract

Significant benefits to infant host defense, sensory-neural development, gastrointestinal maturation, and some aspects of nutritional status are observed when premature infants are fed their mothers' own milk. A reduction in infection-related morbidity in human milk-fed premature infants has been reported in nearly a dozen descriptive, and a few quasi-randomized, studies in the past 25 years. Human milk-fed infants also have decreased rates of rehospitalization for illness after discharge. Studies on neurodevelopmental outcomes have reported significantly positive effects for human milk intake in the neonatal period and long-term mental and motor development, intelligence quotient, and visual acuity through adolescence. Body composition in adolescence also is associated with human milk intake in the neonatal intensive care unit. Finally, human milk intake is less associated with the development of the metabolic syndrome than infant formula feeding.

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