

New Study Looks at Breastfeeding and Rates of Subsequent Infections in Infancy and Toddlerhood

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The benefits of breastfeeding are numerous and well known. One of those benefits is the decreased frequency of infections in infancy. In order to better characterize this benefit, Christensen et al ([10.1542/peds.2019-1892](#)) evaluated prospectively the association between breastfeeding, hospitalizations due to infections, and symptoms of infection at home using a population-based birth cohort of Danish mothers and infants. Mothers in this study were sent text message questionnaires about breastfeeding (weekly until the end of weaning) and infection symptoms (bi-weekly until a child was 12-36 months of age). Hospital records were used to identify hospitalizations. Analysis of 815 mother-baby dyads demonstrated that the longer the duration of breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding, the lower the hospitalization rate as seen in the first year of life, but not in the second or third year after birth for these young children. In the first year, for every additional month of any type of breastfeeding, there was a 4% reduced rate of hospitalization (the mean time for any breastfeeding was a median duration of 7.6 months with exclusive breastfeeding for 2.1 months).

We invited Drs. Meek, Feldman-Winer, and Noble, experts in lactation science and epidemiology, to share their thoughts in an accompanying commentary ([10.1542/peds.2020-021063](#)) about the findings from this report. They briefly review what we know about breastfeeding and infections and how the Christensen et al study advances our knowledge. They suggest mechanisms by which reductions in hospitalization might be attributed to the role of breastfeeding. One proposed hypothesis discusses how breastmilk may change the composition of the intestinal microbiome which in turn may lead to enhanced protection against infectious diseases. Both this study and commentary will keep you updated on the newest information regarding the benefits of breastfeeding for the first year of life, so link to both articles and learn more.

- [In-Hospital Formula Feeding and Breastfeeding Duration](#)

- [Breastfeeding and Mortality Under 2 Years of Age in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)
- [Evidence-Based Updates on the First Week of Exclusive Breastfeeding Among Infants \$\geq 35\$ Weeks](#)
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