

Long-term breastfeeding is related with Intelligence

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Received 06 August; accepted 19 August; published online 01 September; printed 16 September 2013

Breastfeeding is the feeding of an infant or young child with breast milk directly from female human breasts. Breastfeeding makes babies smarter. According to researchers, children who were breastfed longer had higher scores on intelligence or IQ tests. American Academy of Pediatrics notes that "Breastfeeding provides a protective effect against respiratory illnesses, ear infections, gastrointestinal diseases and allergies including asthma, eczema and atopic dermatitis. The rate of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is reduced by over a third in breastfed babies, and there is a 15 percent to 30 percent reduction in adolescent and adult obesity in breastfed vs. non-breastfed infants." The researchers found that 7-year-olds whose moms had done any breastfeeding during the child's first year - exclusively or in combination with formula - gained a little more than a third of a point in verbal IQ for each month of breastfeeding compared to children who were never breastfed. That means if the mom did any mix of breastfeeding for the entire 12 months, the gain would be 4.2 verbal IQ points. Georgieff said beneficial fatty acids found in breast milk have been routinely added to formula in the United States since about 2002. But a class of carbohydrates called oligosaccharides found in breast milk and thought to be beneficial to a baby's health and brain development is not yet found in formula. He also said it is difficult to make cow's milk mimic human milk. Kramer, a Professor of Pediatrics and of Epidemiology & Biostatistics in the McGill University Faculty of Medicine and lead investigator in the study provides the strongest evidence that prolonged and exclusive breastfeeding makes kids smarter. He and his colleagues evaluated the children in 31 Belarusian hospitals and clinics. Half the mothers were exposed to an intervention that encouraged prolonged and exclusive breastfeeding. The remaining half continued their usual maternity hospital and outpatient pediatric care and follow-up. This allowed the researchers to measure the effect of breastfeeding on the children's cognitive development without the results being biased by differences in factors such as the mother's intelligence or her way of interacting with her baby. The children's cognitive ability was assessed by IQ tests administered by the children's pediatricians and by their teachers' ratings of their academic performance in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. Both sets of measures were significantly higher in the group randomized to the breastfeeding promotion intervention. Examination of the effect of breast feeding on cognitive ability and the impact of a range of potential confounders, in particular maternal IQ, within a national database concludes that breast feeding has little or no effect on intelligence in children. While breast feeding has many advantages for the child and mother, enhancement of the child's intelligence is unlikely to be among them.

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