

Breastfeeding reduces arthritis risk

June 15 2007

Breastfeeding for 13 months or more can reduce the mother's risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, Swedish researchers reported Friday.

Comparable use of oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy showed no significant effect on the risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, said Dr. Mitra Keshavarz, of Malmo Hospital University, Sweden.

The findings add to the "growing body of evidence in favor of breastfeeding and its positive health implications -- this time demonstrating its protective benefits for the mother," Keshavarz said.

The study compared information from the Swedish National Hospital Discharge and the National Cause of Death Register from 1991 to 1996.

The findings were presented at the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology in Barcelona.

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Citation: Breastfeeding reduces arthritis risk (2007, June 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-06-breastfeeding-arthritis.html>

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