

Moms who breastfeed less likely to develop heart attacks or strokes

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The longer women breastfeed, the lower their risk of heart attacks, strokes and cardiovascular disease, report University of Pittsburgh researchers in a study published in the May issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

"Heart disease is the leading cause of death for [women](#), so it's vitally important for us to know what we can do to protect ourselves," said Eleanor Bimla Schwarz, M.D., M.S., assistant professor of medicine, epidemiology, and obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. "We have known for years that [breastfeeding](#) is important for babies' health; we now know that it is important for mothers' health as well."

According to the study, postmenopausal women who breastfed for at least one month had lower rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, all known to cause heart disease. Women who had breastfed their babies for more than a year were 10 percent less likely to have had a [heart attack](#), stroke, or developed [heart disease](#) than women who had never breastfed.

Dr. Schwarz and colleagues found that the benefits from breastfeeding were long-term — an average of 35 years had passed since women enrolled in the study had last breastfed an infant.

"The longer a mother nurses her baby, the better for both of them," Dr. Schwarz pointed out. "Our study provides another good reason for

workplace policies to encourage women to breastfeed their infants."

The findings are based on 139,681 postmenopausal women enrolled in the Women's Health Initiative study of chronic disease, initiated in 1994.

Source: University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences ([news](#) : [web](#))

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