

Study finds breastfeeding reduces risk of diabetes for mums

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A study of more than 50,000 women has found breastfeeding may reduce the risks of mums developing diabetes later in life.

According to researchers from the University of Western Sydney's School of Medicine, women who have given birth, but haven't breastfed, have a 50 percent increased risk of [diabetes](#) compared to women who haven't given birth.

The research, published recently in the international *Diabetes Care* journal, analysed the questionnaire responses of 52,731 women selected at random from the Australian national universal health insurance database.

Lead author on the study, Dr Bette Liu from the UWS School of Medicine, says the study showed an association between childbearing and [type 2 diabetes](#) is affected by breastfeeding.

"[Giving birth](#) to children does increase the risk of women developing diabetes later in life, but our study shows women can reduce the risk by breastfeeding their children," says Dr Liu.

"We found that even breastfeeding each child for three months reduces the risks of diabetes for the mother - back to the same as that for [women](#) who have never given birth."

Dr Liu conducted the study with colleagues Professor Louisa Jorm, from UWS and the Sax Institute, and Dr Emily Banks, from the Australian National University.

In their analysis, the researchers took into account a woman's age as well as other factors including [body mass index](#), smoking, level of physical activity, family history of diabetes and socio-economic status.

Dr Liu says the mechanism underlying the preventative role of breastfeeding remains unclear.

"It is possible breastfeeding and the hormonal changes it triggers may provide improved insulin sensitivity which lasts long after childbirth, but more research is needed to understand exactly what is happening," says Dr Liu.

"While we may not yet know how breastfeeding helps protect mothers from diabetes, it is now clear the long-term health benefits of [breastfeeding](#) are no longer confined to just the child."

More information: More details on study can be found here: tinyurl.com/ycw6h9q

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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