

## Breastfeeding app shows promise in supporting first-time mothers

April 30 2016

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A pilot study found that use of a mobile phone app that provided supportive texts and an online community significantly increased the rate of breastfeeding among new mothers. An abstract of the study, "Mother's Milk Messaging (MMM): A Pilot Study of an App to Support Breastfeeding in First Time Mothers," will be presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) 2016 Meeting in Baltimore on May 1, 2016.

Women participating in the study began interacting with the MMM app roughly six weeks before their delivery date and continued using it the same length of time after giving birth. They received 5 to 7 messages to the app as "push notifications" via text each week. About a quarter of the text messages asked for a response from participants, asking them about normal stooling patterns in [babies](#) in the first 4-7 days of life, for example, or whether they knew that babies fed exclusively with breast milk in their first months of life have lower rates of obesity later. The app also linked participants to a private Facebook page, where informative links, supportive comments and brief videos were posted. Comments and questions were monitored and [breastfeeding](#) questions received responses from pediatrician Maya Bunik, MD, MSPH, FAAP, the study's lead investigator and an author of American Academy of Pediatrics book Breastfeeding Telephone Triage and Advice .

Among study participants who used the app, 95 percent were currently breastfeeding three months after giving birth, compared with 83 percent of the control group. The same amount (95 percent) were feeding babies breastmilk more than 80 percent of the time, compared with 78 percent

of women who hadn't used the app. Participants who used the app also had greater confidence ratings about breastfeeding issues, such as knowing if their babies were getting enough milk and coping with breastfeeding challenges.

"We wanted as many mothers and babies to take advantage of the health benefits of breastfeeding and all babies to be offered human milk as their first food, and we know that women of child-bearing age are in the generation most likely to own a cell phone and use texting to communicate," Dr. Bunik said. "Cell phones have been shown to be an effective way to increase prescribed use HIV medication, to help quit smoking and to better manage diabetes. Our [pilot study](#) suggests that they also can be useful with breastfeeding support and management."

Dr. Bunik said her research team currently is planning a larger trial.

The MMM study abstract is one several being presented at the PAS 2016 Meeting that explore the use of mobile phone apps in healthcare and medical training. The abstract, "Development of an Algorithm to Convert Digital Image Data into an Estimate of Bilirubin Using a Smartphone App", for example, found a cell phone [app](#) to screen babies for jaundice using digital images of their skin correctly identified 28 of 30 newborns with elevated bilirubin levels.

**More information:** [www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...  
?nu=PAS16L1\\_2863.475](http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...?nu=PAS16L1_2863.475)

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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