

Breastfeeding may reduce diabetes risk for women with gestational diabetes

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The longer a woman with gestational, or pregnancy-related, diabetes breastfeeds her infant, the lower her risk for developing type 2 diabetes later in life, suggests an analysis by researchers at the National Institutes

of Health and other institutions. The study was conducted by Cuilin Zhang, M.D., Ph.D., of NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and colleagues. It appears in *Diabetes Care*.

In addition to [health risks](#) for mothers and babies, [gestational diabetes](#) increases the risk for type 2 diabetes 10 to 20 years after pregnancy. Type 2 diabetes increases the risk for heart disease, stroke and other health problems.

The researchers analyzed data from the Nurses' Health Study II, a long-term study of risk factors for chronic diseases in women. Of more than 4,000 women in the study who had gestational diabetes, 873 developed type 2 diabetes over the course of 25 years. Compared to women with gestational diabetes who had not breastfed, those who breastfed for six to 12 months were 9% less likely to develop type 2 diabetes, those who breastfed for one to two years were 15% less likely, and those who breastfed for more than two years were 27% less likely.

The researchers suggested that clinicians may want to encourage patients with gestational diabetes to breastfeed if they are able to, to potentially reduce their type 2 diabetes risk.

More information: Sylvia H. Ley et al. Lactation Duration and Long-term Risk for Incident Type 2 Diabetes in Women With a History of Gestational Diabetes Mellitus, *Diabetes Care* (2020). [DOI: 10.2337/dc19-2237](#)

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