

'Breast is best' push out of touch

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University of Queensland researchers have discovered why only 34 per cent of mothers exclusively breastfeed to six months, despite the global push to increase rates to 50 per cent.

Lead researcher Dr. Katrina Moss said mothers primarily stopped

breastfeeding because of milk shortages or breastfeeding difficulties, such as latching and mastitis.

"Mothers can feel intense pressure to breastfeed, but breastfeeding isn't best for everyone," Dr. Moss said.

"If mothers run into breastfeeding problems they may need to supplement or stop."

Dr. Moss said compassion must play a bigger role in the breastfeeding debate.

"Feeding difficulties can increase the risk of perinatal anxiety and depression, which is experienced by up to 20 per cent of mothers," Dr. Moss said.

Using data from nearly 2,900 women with more than 5,300 children in the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, the researchers also found 41 per cent of mothers supplemented breastfeeding with [solid food](#) or formula.

"Feeding messages have been polarised between [breastfeeding](#) and formula, but in reality, it's not that simple; we found six different feeding practices," Dr. Moss said.

Dr. Moss suggested mothers receive evidence-based information about natural fluctuations in breastmilk production, how to safely formula feed, and how to recognise cues that their baby is ready for solids.

"The majority of [mothers](#) don't exclusively breastfeed, usually for very good reasons, and the support they receive needs to reflect this," Dr. Moss said.

"This study highlights the need for personalised support specific to each mother's situation."

The Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines and Australian Medical Association encourage support for all feeding practices. Mothers wanting more information can visit the raising children website.

The study was published in the *Journal of Human Lactation*.

More information: Katrina M. Moss et al, Which Australian Women Do Not Exclusively Breastfeed to 6 Months, and why?, *Journal of Human Lactation* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/0890334420929993](https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420929993)

Provided by University of Queensland

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