

Examining the effects of breastfeeding on maternal mental health

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A new systemic review of the literature examines the effects of breastfeeding on maternal mental health to inform breastfeeding recommendations. The results of this study are published in the *Journal*

of Women's Health.

Megan Yuen and Olivia Hall, from the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, and colleagues, found that overall, breastfeeding was associated with improved maternal [mental health](#) outcomes. However, if a mother experiences difficulties breastfeeding or differences between her expectations and her actual experience, breastfeeding was associated with negative mental health outcomes.

Of 36 studies that found a statistically significant relationship between breastfeeding and mental health, 29 of those found that breastfeeding was associated with fewer mental health symptoms, and one found that breastfeeding was associated with increased maternal mental health symptoms. Of 34 studies that found a statistically [significant relationship](#) between breastfeeding and symptoms of postpartum depression, 28 studies found that breastfeeding was associated with a decreased risk of postpartum depression symptoms.

"To help clinicians personalize breastfeeding and mental health counseling, it is important to recognize that while breastfeeding is generally associated with improved maternal mental health, it can have negative mental [health](#) consequences if the mother experiences [breastfeeding](#) challenges or the experience does not meet her expectations," says *Journal of Women's Health* Editor-in-Chief Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA.

More information: Megan Yuen et al, The Effects of Breastfeeding on Maternal Mental Health: A Systematic Review, *Journal of Women's Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2021.0504](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2021.0504)

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