Early term infants less likely to breastfeed
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A new, prospective study provides evidence that "early term" infants (those born at 37-38 weeks) are less likely than full-term infants to be breastfeed within the first hour and at one month after birth. The early-term infants also had lower exclusive breastfeeding and lower breastfeeding intensity during the first 72 hours in the hospital and at one month, according to the study published in Breastfeeding Medicine.

The article is entitled "Breastfeeding Intensity and Exclusivity of Early Term Infants at Birth and One Month" and was written by Anita Noble, DNSc, Hadassah-Hebrew University (Jerusalem, Israel), Lawrence Noble, MD, Elmhurst/Hospital/Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (Elmhurst, NY), and coauthors from Hadassah-Hebrew University and Kings County Hospital/SUNY-Downstate Medical Center (Brooklyn, NY).

The researchers recommend that extra attention and lactation assistance be given to the early term infant/maternal pair to help overcome the difficulties in breastfeeding that may be caused by the neurologic immaturity of the infants. Beginning breastfeeding within the critical hour(s) after birth can have a substantial impact on continuation rates at one month and on infant health, morbidity, and mortality.

Arthur I. Eidelman, MD, Editor-in-Chief of Breastfeeding Medicine states: "This study emphasizes that though technically labeled as term infants, this is a high risk population that requires added and targeted breastfeeding support programs."


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