

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Breastfeeding Could Help Break Cycle of Diabetes

*Study Finds Breastfed Babies Are Less Likely to Become Obese,  
Even if Mother is Obese or Has Diabetes*

**(Alexandria, VA)** – How to break the cycle of diabetes that often plagues families – especially those in which the parents are overweight – is a problem that has troubled researchers and physicians for many years. But a study being published in the October issue of *Diabetes Care* provides families with one tool that may help: Breastfeeding.

The Harvard School of Public Health based study, of more than 15,000 boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 14, found that those who were breastfed during the first year of life were less likely to become obese as they grew older – regardless of whether their mothers were overweight or had diabetes. This research contradicts a previous study that suggested that children breastfed by mothers with diabetes exhibited poor glucose tolerance and excessive weight gain as they began to grow.

“In contrast to the earlier study, we were able to include mothers in our study who didn’t have diabetes, as well as those who did, and our sample size was significantly larger,” said lead researcher Elizabeth J. Mayer-Davis, PhD, of the University of South Carolina’s Arnold School of Public Health. “We found a substantial benefit to breastfeeding for all children, regardless of their mother’s weight or health status. For children at higher risk for diabetes or obesity because of their family history, breastfeeding may play a critical role in helping to reduce the risk of excessive weight gain. Obviously, other factors are important as well, such as continued good nutrition and regular physical activity. But breastfeeding can get them started down a healthy track in life.”

Breastfed babies may be less likely to put on extra pounds because their mothers respond to the baby’s natural cries for food (rather than a schedule) and internal signals to stop eating when they are full, rather than being given a specific amount of food and encouraged to finish whatever is in the bottle.

The United States is in the midst of an epidemic of obesity and overweight, for both children and adults. Obesity is one of the leading risk factors for type 2 diabetes, a disease that has begun to show up in American youth in recent decades as obesity rates climb.

- more -

### National Office

1701 North Beauregard Street  
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### Diabetes Information

call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)  
online [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)  
The Association gratefully accepts gifts through your will.

### The Mission of the American

Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

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The National Institutes of Health provided financial support for this study.

To reach lead interviewer Dr. Mayer-Davis, phone: 803-251-7873 or email: [EJMayer@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:EJMayer@gwm.sc.edu).

## High-Fiber Diet Prior to Pregnancy Helps Prevent Gestational Diabetes

A separate study in the October issue found that women who ate a high-fiber diet prior to becoming pregnant were less likely to develop gestational diabetes. Specifically, it found that every 10 grams of total daily fiber intake reduced the risk of gestational diabetes by 26 percent. The beneficial effects of dietary fiber in this study mainly came from eating fruit, cold breakfast cereal, and dark bread.

Previous research has shown that maternal glucose is one of the major energy sources for fetal growth and that maintaining a lower glycemic index helps to prevent high-birthweight babies. In this study, women with high glycemic loads and low dietary fiber were twice as likely to develop gestational diabetes, a condition that often results in high-birthweight babies.

Since women who experience gestational diabetes are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life, eating a high-fiber diet could not only improve their health during pregnancy, it could help set the course for a lifetime of better health. In its recently updated Nutritional Guidelines, the American Diabetes Association stressed the important preventive role that fiber can play in the diet of those who are at risk for diabetes.

This study was funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

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*Diabetes Care*, published by the American Diabetes Association, is the leading peer-reviewed journal of clinical research into the nation's fifth leading cause of death by disease. Diabetes also is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke, as well as the leading cause of adult blindness, kidney failure, and non-traumatic amputations. For more information about diabetes, visit the American Diabetes Association Web site [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

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