

Study shows adolescents who were breastfed at birth have stronger leg muscles

Breast feeding newborn babies has lots of advantages in the short and in the long-term for babies. A study has confirmed the recently discovered benefits, which had not been researched until now. Adolescents who are breast fed at birth have stronger leg muscles than those who received artificial milk.

Enrique García Artero, the principal author of the study and researcher at the University of Granada pointed out that, "Our objective was to analyse the relationship between the duration of breastfeeding babies and their physical condition in adolescence". The results suggest further beneficial effects and provide support to breast feeding as superior to any other type of feeding".

The authors asked the parents of 2567 adolescents about the type of feeding their children received at birth and the time this lasted. The adolescents also carried out physical tests in order to evaluate several abilities such as aerobic capacities and their muscular strength.

Stronger leg muscles

The paper, which was published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, shows that the adolescents who were breastfed as babies have stronger leg muscles than those who were not breastfed. Moreover, muscular leg strength was greater in those who had been breastfed for a longer period of time.

This type of feeding (exclusively or in combination with other types of food) is associated with a better performance in horizontal jumping by boys and girls regardless of morphological factors such as fat mass, height of the adolescent or the amount of muscle.

Adolescents who were breastfed from three to five months, or for more than six months had half the risk of low performance in the jump exercise when compared with those who had never been breastfed.

García Artero stressed that, "Until now, no studies have examined the association between breastfeeding and future muscular aptitude". "However, our results concur with the observations made as regards other neonatal factors, such as weight at birth, are positively related to better muscular condition during adolescence".

What importance does breastfeeding have?

"If all children were exclusively breastfed from birth, it would be possible to save approximately 1.5 million lives". This was

stated by the UNICEF, which pointed out that breast feeding is the "perfect feed" exclusively during the first six months of life and additionally over two years.

As regards the newborn, the advantages in the first years of life include immunological protection against allergies, skin diseases, obesity and diabetes, as well as a guarantee of the growth, development and intelligence of the baby.

The benefits also substantially involve the woman: reduction of post-birth haemorrhage, anaemia, maternity mortality, and the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and it strengthens the affective link between mother and child. "Let's forget about the money saved by not buying other types of milk and baby bottles", says García Artero.

Source: University of Granada

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