

Breastfeeding Practices Among First-Time Mothers and Across Multiple Pregnancies

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SUMMARY: Successful breastfeeding in a first pregnancy predicts successful breastfeeding in subsequent pregnancies. This is one of the findings analyzed from the Mothers Outcome After Delivery, (MOAD) study. The aim of the study team was to review characteristics of breastfeeding initiation and success.

At the time of the analysis there were 858 women enrolled. Of the 858, 812 or 95% reported completed information regarding breast feeding for all their deliveries (with seventy-two percent of mothers having more than one pregnancy). Some of the characteristics reviewed for this analysis included race, # of births, the mother's age at delivery, the type of delivery (vaginal or cesarean), and the mother's level of education. Median age at time of the first delivery was 32 years. At the time they joined MOAD, 43% of MOAD members had a college degree and 34% a graduate degree. Eighty –four percent were Caucasian.

Analysis of the data demonstrated of the 91% of women who tried to breastfeed their first child, 80% were successful at breast feeding. The paper also noted if mothers were unsuccessful at breast feeding with their first birth they would most likely not breastfeed their other children. As a result, the proportion of women who tried to breastfeed decreased from 91% with the first birth, to 88% with the second birth and 85% with the third birth.

There was good news from this study. First, an important finding is cesarean birth did not have an impact on initiating or success of breastfeeding. (This is different than in some European studies, which have suggested more difficulty breastfeeding after cesarean.) Also, of women who had trouble breastfeeding but tried to breastfeed again, 40% were successful. Finally, the probability of breastfeeding success increased with each subsequent delivery (from 80% with a first birth to 89% with a second birth and 93% with a third birth.

The MOAD study provided a unique opportunity to study breastfeeding initiation across the 5 - 10 year reproductive span of these mothers as well as the impact of other obstetrical events.

This scientific paper was published in the August issue of the “Maternal Child Health Journal.” The full paper can be read below:

http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/johns_hopkins_bayview/docs/medical_services/obstetrics_gynecology/research/MOAD/BreastfeedingPractices_FullText.pdf