

Moms Who Breast-feed May Enjoy an Added Benefit: Lower Blood Pressure

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Mothers who nursed their babies for the recommended amount of time (which is at least six months) might have a lower risk of developing high blood pressure later in life, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* and reported by [Reuters](#).

In the past, studies showed that breast feeding provides immediate benefits to babies, such as diarrhea protection and middle-ear infections. And, for moms, studies revealed that it lowered women's risk of diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease. Now this study found it might also lower a mother's risk of developing high blood pressure.

For the study, researchers looked at the connection between breast feeding and a later risk of high blood pressure in nearly 56,000 U.S. women. All the women had at least one baby and were participants in the long-running Nurses' Health Study II.

Researchers found that, overall, women who breast-fed for at least six months were less likely to develop high blood pressure during a 14-year period compared with those moms who only bottle fed. What's more, women who did not breast-feed their first child had a 22 percent higher risk of developing high blood pressure than moms who breast-fed their babies for a year. In addition, women who had never breast-fed or only breast-fed their babies for three months or less were 25 percent more likely to develop high blood pressure compared with women who breast-fed for a year.

But despite the findings, researchers stressed these results did not prove that breast feeding gave long-term protection against high blood pressure. Scientists said they could not rule out the possibility that factors that stopped mothers from breast-feeding, such as a stressful work environment, might also cause women to develop high blood pressure.

Still, health advocates recommend women breast-feed their babies, and the World Health Organization encourages hospitals to take steps to help mothers' become comfortable with breast feeding.

To learn more about the benefits of breast feeding, [click here](#).

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