maternal breast tissue and the developing digestive tract of newborns.

Armorgida, Sheila A; Yannaras, Niki M; Melton, Alton L; Srivastava, Maya D. Identification and quantification of innate immune system mediators in human breast milk. Allergy and Asthma Proc 25: 297-304, 2004

**INCREASED RISK OF OVERWEIGHT**

A Brazilian cohort of 405 women were followed at 6 and 9 months postpartum to determine the association between weight retention and breastfeeding practices. When women who had 22% body fat and breastfed for 180 days were compared with those who had breastfed for only 30 days, each month of breastfeeding brought an average reduction of 0.44 kg in weight. In conclusion the authors confirm the association between breastfeeding and postpartum weight and that the promotion of longer duration can contribute to decreases in postpartum weight retention.


**INCREASED RISK OF OVARIAN CANCER AND ENDOMETRIAL CANCER**

Not breastfeeding has been associated with increased risk of ovarian cancer. A large case-control Italian study of 1031 women with epithelial ovarian cancer were compared to 2411 women admitted to the same network of hospitals for a wide spectrum of acute non-neoplastic conditions, unrelated to known risk factors for ovarian cancer. Results showed inverse trends in risk with increasing duration of breastfeeding and number of children breastfed. Additional analyses by histologic subtypes suggested that the protective role of breastfeeding would be larger for serious neoplasms.


To determine the link between breastfeeding and endometrial cancer, this Japanese hospital-based case-control study compared cases of women with endometrial cancer (155) with controls (96) selected from women attending the outpatient clinic for cervical cancer screening. The women were interviewed to determine breastfeeding practices, contraceptive usage, as well as potential risk factors for endometrial cancer. The authors observed a greater risk of endometrial cancer for parous women who had never breastfed, and concluded that breastfeeding reduces the risk of endometrial cancer in Japanese women.

Okamura C, Tsuboro Y, Ito K, Nikiura H, Takano T, Nagase S, Yoshinaga K, Terada Y, Murakami T, Sato S, Aoki D, Jobo T, Oshita K. Breastfeeding, return of menses and this rose to 70.2% at six months. The duration of lactational amenorrhea was longer in exclusively breastfeeding mothers than in those who were not. None of the 178 mothers who participated in the survey became pregnant.


**INCREASED RISK OF RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS**

Female reproductive and hormonal risks factors were studied in a cohort of 121,700 women enrolled in the Nurses’ Health Study. Breastfeeding for more than 12 months was inversely related to the development of rheumatoid arthritis. The effect was found to be dose related. Those who breastfed shorter had a higher risk.

Karlson E W et al. Do breast-feeding and other reproductive factors influence future risk of rheumatoid arthritis? Results from the Nurses Health Study. Arthritis & Rheumatism 50: 3458-3467, 2004

**INCREASED RISK OF MATERNAL DIABETES**

Breastfeeding also reduces the mother’s risk of type II diabetes later in life. The longer the duration of breastfeeding, the lower the incidence of diabetes, according to this Harvard based study. The researchers studied 83,585 mothers in the Nurses’ Health Study (NHS) and 73,418 mothers in the Nurses’ Health Study II (NHS II), and determined that each year of breastfeeding reduced the mother’s risk of diabetes by 15%.


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