Promoting Breastfeeding in Teenage Mothers

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Why focus on teens?

- About 300,000 babies are born to teens in the US each year
- Low initiation rate
- Short duration
- Low exclusive breastfeeding
- Teens face unique challenges

- 323 adolescent moms and their mothers
- Divided into those who lived with their moms and those who didn’t
- Educational intervention sessions included adolescent and her mom
- First occurred in the hospital just prior to discharge
- Five additional sessions in the home when baby was 7, 15, 30, 60 and 120 days old
In hospital session was done individually with the teen mom and the grandma.

Included basic information such as importance of breastfeeding, milk production, basic technique, and infant crying and cues.

Specific doubts of participants were addressed.

Moms were encouraged to nurse during the session to receive information on positioning, latch, etc.
- Home sessions were done jointly with the teen mom and the grandma

- Discussed difficulties and how they are dealing with them

- Information from hospital education was reinforced

- Exclusivity was encouraged
Results:

- Mean duration of EBF was 41 days in the control group.
- Mean duration of EBF was 99 days in the intervention group.
- Estimated that intervention decreased the abandonment of EBF in first six months by 48%. 

Longitudinal study pregnancy through 6 months postpartum

71% initiated

84% stopped by 6 months (average duration of 5 weeks)
Factors which influenced breastfeeding

- Stronger social support decreased initiation
- Complications during labor and birth increased initiation
- Breastfeeding exclusivity influenced by pre-pregnancy BMI
- IPV decreased duration especially among younger teens

- Hispanic had greater initiation (89%) and duration (60% at 4 weeks)
- About half (52%) of whites initiated with 26% still breastfeeding at 4 weeks
- Blacks had lowest initiation (35%) and duration with just 17% still breastfeeding at 4 weeks
Reasons for not breastfeeding

- “I don’t like breastfeeding.”
- Going back to work or school
- Embarrassed to breastfeed
- Don’t want to be tied down
- Wanted body back
- Negative experiences of friends and relatives
Reasons for Discontinuing

Few moms continued for 4 weeks (16.9%)

- Going back to school (34%)
- Breastmilk did not satisfy baby (33%)
- Inadequate supply (32%)
- Nipple pain (40% of those who stopped in first 4 weeks)
- Didn’t like leaking
- Breastfeeding took too long
Canadian adolescent mothers’ perceptions of influences on breastfeeding decisions: a qualitative descriptive study


Identified four factors that influenced continued breastfeeding:

1. Impact on social and intimate relationships
2. Social support
3. Physical demands of breastfeeding
4. Mom’s perceived sense of comfort with breastfeeding
Impact on social and intimate relationships

- More than half said that there was a negative impact on friendships and relationship with partner
- Limited ability to participate in activities they did pre-pregnancy
- Easier to leave baby when not breastfeeding
- Felt judged for being a teen mom and that public nursing increased the feeling of being watched
Effect of social support

- Having female family members who had positive breastfeeding experiences influenced initiation.
- Family members were not able to provide practical help with specifics of breastfeeding.
- Hands-on assistance and encouragement received in hospital was identified as important by moms.
- Teens were aware of community resources but did not feel the need to use them even when having difficulty.
What can we do in the Omaha/Council Bluffs community to promote teen breastfeeding?
Studies suggested:

Ongoing prenatal education for teens AND their support people

Use of Motivational Interviewing to reduce ambivalence

Assistance and education while in hospital

Early follow-up after discharge
Early postpartum intervention after discharge

- Address challenges
- Reinforce practical aspects of breastfeeding
- Positive reinforcement to promote confidence
- Educate about normal newborn behavior
- Provide information on lactation services in community
- Include support people if possible
Other suggestions for our community

- Engage educational system in promoting breastfeeding
  - Create a supportive environment for breastfeeding moms
  - Provide a private place for pumping at school
  - Incorporate breastfeeding in curriculum
- Enlist childcare facilities to support breastfeeding
- Use of social media to promote/educate
- Develop peer support groups
References

