

Breastfeeding mothers less likely to suffer depression, study finds

'Mental health of mothers' benefited by breastfeeding, says author



The breast-feeding study used data from 14,000 births in the Bristol area in the 1990s, making it one of the largest of its kind.

Michel Destrade

Topics: News Health

Department Of Sociology

Wed, Aug 20, 2014, 01:00

Recommend

774

Tweet

28

g+1



Breastfeeding is beneficial not only to babies but also to their mothers' wellbeing, according to a new UK study. It found that mothers who had planned, and went on, to breastfeed were half as likely to become depressed following birth as those who had planned not to, and did not, breastfeed.

The study used data from 14,000 births in the Bristol area in the 1990s, making it one of the largest of its kind. It showed overall that one in eight women experienced **depression** in the three years after the birth. But breastfeeding mothers faced a reduced risk of depression compared to those who didn't.

Breastfeeding "benefits the mental health of mothers", said one of the authors, Dr Maria Iacovou at the University of Cambridge's department of sociology, who collaborated with researchers in Spain.



It's okay not to feel okay. And it's okay to talk about it



Ireland's mental health took a beating, says professor



Suicide an issue for 1 in 10 young people presenting to Jigsaw

In Ireland only one in two newborn babies is breastfed. "This is just about the lowest rate in the world" according to Richard Layte, a research professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute.

Prof Michael Turner, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at UCD raised concerns about the study, however. He said it would be difficult to establish cause and effect between stopping breastfeeding and depression.

In 1994 he conducted a survey at the Coombe University Hospital which showed that Irish **postnatal depression** rates were similar to those in other EU countries.

Prof Turner still welcomed the research because it emphasises how common postnatal depression has become. Other research has shown that breastfeeding can lead to decreased risks of Type 2 diabetes, ovarian and breast cancers.

The study is published today in the *Maternal and Child Health Journal*.