

[IMAGE]

Breastfeeding Shown to Reduce Skin Rashes in Infants

Eczema is a common childhood condition, characterized by dry skin and an itchy, red rash. Although it can occur anywhere on the body, eczema usually develops on the face, hands, knees and feet. Breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk of asthma in infants significantly. However, the evidence suggesting that breastfeeding can reduce the risk of eczema is less clear.

In this study, researchers surveyed parents of more than 4,000 newborns about breastfeeding habits and their children's allergy symptoms. Surveys were taken when the children were 2 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 4 years old; blood samples were also taken at age 4 to determine whether the children had developed any specific allergies.

Overall, infants whose diet consisted exclusively of breast milk for 4 months or longer after birth had a 22 percent reduced risk of eczema at 4 years old. This finding was especially true among children whose eczema symptoms appeared during the first 2 years of life and persisted until age 4. The researchers concluded that breastfeeding has a protective effect against eczema, and also reduces the incidence of a phenomenon called "allergy march," in which a child's allergy symptoms may persist into their later years, but the allergic condition takes another form. For more information on eczema and other childhood conditions, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/pediatrics.

Kull I, Bohme M, Wahlgren CF, et al. Breast-feeding reduces the risk for childhood eczema. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, October 2005;116(3):657-661.

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