

[IMAGE]

When Breastfeeding Stops Too Soon

By Editorial Staff

The health benefits of breastfeeding are well-established, and they aren't restricted to the child; even mom benefits in several ways, according to research. But while several variables can impact the duration of breastfeeding, a new study suggests mothers with higher levels of certain chemicals in their bodies may be more likely to stop prematurely.

Women provided researchers with information about their duration of breastfeeding postpartum via questionnaires and weekly text messages at three and 18 months following the birth of their child. Blood samples assessed the presence of five major perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), manmade chemicals commonly found in oil and water repellents, and coatings for products such as cookware, carpets and textiles. Because PFAS do not break down, we are continually exposed to them.

Among nearly 1,300 mothers from whom responses were gathered, those with higher levels of PFAS were more likely to stop breastfeeding early compared to women with lower blood levels of PFAS – up to 20 percent earlier, depending on the PFAS. Findings appear in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states the following in regard to PFAS and breastfeeding: "PFAS can migrate from a mother's blood into her breast milk which may then expose breast-fed infants to PFAS. However, based on current science, the benefits of breastfeeding appear in most cases to outweigh the risks of exposure to PFAS for infants and provide many proven health benefits for infants, including protecting them from illness." Even if that's true, if PFAS potentially reduce breastfeeding duration, then they effectively reduce the benefits mothers and their infants can reap from breastfeeding. Food for thought.

To learn ways you can reduce your / your family's exposure to PFAS, [click here](#) for information from Clean Water Action.

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