



Does Nighttime Breastfeeding Increase Women's Risk of Postpartum Depression?

Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, Ph.D., IBCLC

Department of Pediatrics, Texas Tech University School of Medicine.

Dr. Kendall-Tackett is a health psychologist and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. She is a Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Texas Tech University School of Medicine in Amarillo, Texas, and Acquisitions Editor for Hale Publishing. Dr. Kendall-Tackett is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association in both the Divisions of Health and Trauma Psychology, and is Associate Editor of the journal *Psychological Trauma*. Dr. Kendall-Tackett is author of more than 230 journal articles, book chapters and other publications, and author or editor of 19 books in the fields of trauma, women's health, depression, and breastfeeding, including *Depression in New Mothers, 2nd Edition* (2010, Taylor & Francis), *Non-Pharmacologic Treatments for Depression in New Mothers* (2008, Hale Publishing), and *Breastfeeding Made Simple* (co-authored with Nancy Mohrbacher). She is a founding officer of the American Psychological Association's Division of Trauma Psychology, and is currently serving her second term as Division Secretary.

Dr. Kendall-Tackett received a Bachelor's and Master's degree in psychology from California State University, Chico, and a Ph.D. from Brandeis University in social and developmental psychology. She has won several awards including the Outstanding Research Study Award from the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, and was named 2003 Distinguished Alumna, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, California State University, Chico. Her Web sites are www.UppityScienceChick.com and www.BreastfeedingMadeSimple.com.

Does nighttime breastfeeding elevate the risk of depression in new mothers? There are an increasing number of professionals, books, and organizations that tell mothers not to breastfeed at night in order to prevent depression. While this advice is well-intended, no one knows if it even actually does what is promised. What's worse, abstaining from nighttime feedings will likely have a negative impact on breastfeeding. Summarizing recent research and using data from the Survey of Mothers' Sleep and Fatigue, a survey of 6,410 mothers from 59 countries, I examine the relationship between feeding method, where babies sleep and maternal fatigue. Recent research indicates that breastfeeding mothers actually get more sleep, and better-quality sleep, than their formula-feeding or mixed-feeding counterparts. Preliminary analyses from our data reveal that breastfeeding mothers report less daytime fatigue and more energy. This presentation will also include an analysis of other factors that can compromise the sleep of new mothers, such as depression or a history of sexual trauma. Our data indicate that women who have experienced sexual trauma, or who are depressed, have compromised sleep and more daytime fatigue—independent of the effects of nighttime parenting. Recommendations for sleep interventions for mothers cannot be one-size-fits-all. They must examine all the factors that can cause sleep issues. And breastfeeding, while frequently blamed for problems, may in fact be helping mothers cope. In fact, advising a woman to stop breastfeeding at night may actually increase her daytime fatigue and subsequent risk for depression.