



# ECHO

Environmental influences  
on Child Health Outcomes

A program supported by the NIH

## Study Summary

### ***How does maternal food quality during pregnancy affect their duration of breastfeeding?***

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#### Who sponsored this study?

This research was supported by the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program, Office of The Director, National Institutes of Health.

#### Why was this study needed?

Breastfeeding promotes positive health outcomes for infants, but few studies have looked at the connection between the quality of mothers' food during pregnancy and the length of time they breastfed. This study examined the relationship between self-reported food quality and preparation (e.g., organic foods, processed foods, take out) during pregnancy and breastfeeding duration.

#### Who was involved?

This study included 751 mothers who were at least 18 years old and their infants from 12 ECHO cohorts located across the United States.

#### What happened during the study?

Mothers reported on their food source and preparation during pregnancy and were placed in one of three groups: high, moderate, or low food source quality. Mothers also reported on their breastfeeding duration. Researchers investigated whether there was a relationship between the mothers' food quality during pregnancy and the length of time they breastfed.

#### What were the study results?

The results from this study suggested that pregnant people who reported eating the most processed food and take-out tended to breastfeed for an average of 16 weeks (4 months), while pregnant people who reported eating the least amount of processed food and take-out breastfed for an average of 41 weeks (10 months).

Footnote: Results reported here are for a single study. Other or future studies may provide new information or different results. You should not make changes to your health without first consulting your healthcare professional.

#### Impact

This is the first large and diverse cohort study examining the potential link between maternal food quality during pregnancy and breastfeeding duration. The results from this study suggest that pregnant people who eat a lot of processed food or take-out during pregnancy, tend to breastfeed for a shorter period of time.

### What happens next?

Future studies are needed to understand the relation between breastfeeding duration and maternal food quality over time. These studies can also provide more specific information on maternal diet, food source, and preparation during pregnancy while considering other important factors, like socioeconomic status, that may affect the types of foods mothers have access too.

### Where can I learn more?

Access the full journal article, titled “Association Between Quality of Maternal Prenatal Food Source and Preparation and Breastfeeding Duration in The Environmental influences on Child Health Outcome (ECHO) Program,” in [Nutrients](#).

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