





Using Skin-to-Skin Contact to Increase Exclusive Breastfeeding at a Military Medical Center

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Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life has been found to have multiple benefits for both women and infants, but for many military women who must return to duty within 6 weeks of birth, exclusively breastfeeding for 6 months can be difficult (American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP], 2012; McPeak, Sandrock, Spector, & Pattishall, 2015; Sharma, Dee, & Harden, 2014). The literature clearly states that early supplementation is associated with early weaning (Forster, McLachlan, & Lumley, 2006; Jessri et al., 2013; Kim, Hoetmer, Li, & Vandenberg, 2013; Thulier & Mercer, 2009). When you combine that with the unique challenges faced by military women (long hours, grueling work schedules and geographic separation from family and loved ones), exclusive breastfeeding can become a daunting task (Rychnovsky, 2007).

Abstract: Evidence shows that early formula supplementation leads to early weaning from exclusive breastfeeding. We implemented an evidence-based practice project on skin-to-skin contact (SSC) for healthy term newborns at a large military treatment facility in an effort to decrease formula supplementation in the early postpartum period. Military women face unique challenges when it comes to breastfeeding. SSC in the early postpartum period is an effective intervention to increase exclusive breastfeeding during the hospital stay and foster future positive breastfeeding outcomes. Through this project, staff knowledge of the benefits of SSC to women and newborns improved and the hospital's exclusive breastfeeding rate increased by 20 percent. DOI: 10.1111/1751-486X.12244

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