

Journal article

Health benefits and healthcare savings associated with breastfeeding



What we did

The study analysed health records for over 500,000 infants born in Scotland between 1997 and 2009. We compared childhood illness and hospitalisation for infants who had been formula-fed, mixed-fed, and exclusively breastfed and compared their associated healthcare costs.

Findings



Exclusively breastfed infants (up to 6-8 weeks) used fewer healthcare services and incurred lower costs compared to infants fed formula milk, and breastfed infants had better health outcomes no matter the level of deprivation of where they lived in.

At least £10 million of the healthcare costs may have been avoided if formula-fed infants had been exclusively breastfed within the first 6-8 weeks of birth.



Our study shows how breastfeeding can contribute to more equitable child health by reducing childhood illness and healthcare costs.

Citation: Ajetunmobi O, McIntosh E, Stockton D, Tappin D, Whyte B. Levelling up health in the early years: a cost-analysis of infant feeding and healthcare. PLOS One, 2024.

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