Effect of Skin-to-Skin Contact on Postpartum Depression, Breastfeeding Duration & Infant Responsiveness

Ann E. Bigelow, PhD

Learner Objectives—The learner will be able to:

- Describe how mother-infant skin-to-skin contact has been shown to facilitate the maintenance of breastfeeding during the infants’ early months.
- Describe how mother-infant skin-to-skin contact has been shown to reduce maternal postpartum depression.
- Describe how mother-infant skin-to-skin contact has been shown to enhance infants’ responsiveness to their mothers in social interaction.

Presentation:

Although mother-infant skin-to-skin contact has long been known to help newborn infants' neurophysiological adjustment shortly after birth, skin-to-skin contact also can have sustaining behavioral effects on mothers, infants, and their developing relationship. A Nova Scotia study examined the effect of skin-to-skin contact on mothers' and infants' behavior over the infants' first three months. The presentation will focus on the study's findings concerning mothers' maintenance of breastfeeding, maternal postpartum depression, and infants' responsiveness to their mothers in social interaction. The research includes the following collaborators in addition to the presenter: Michelle Power, BSc; Doris Gillis, PhD; Janis MacLellan-Peters, MSc, RN; Marion Alex, MSc, RN; and Claudette McDonald, BSc, RN.

References


Bigelow, A. E., Power, M., Gillis, D., MacLellan-Peters, J., Alex, M., & McDonald, C. (under review). Breastfeeding, skin-to-skin contact, and mother-infant interactions over infants’ first three months.


Breastfeeding: It Just Makes Good Science


About the Speaker

Dr. Bigelow is a Professor of Psychology at St. Francis Xavier University in Antogonish, Nova Scotia. Her research expertise is in infant social-cognitive development and mother/child interaction. She has published over 45 journal articles and book chapters on infancy and early childhood development. Dr. Bigelow is a fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association and has received outstanding teaching awards from her university and from the Association of Atlantic Universities.