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Breastfeeding is already widely known to produce many health benefits, ranging from better immunity to a reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome (cot death). Now a new study has found that adolescents who were breastfed as babies have stronger leg muscles than those who were fed formula milk.

Spanish researchers set out to analyse 'the relationship between the duration of breastfeeding babies and their physical condition in adolescence'. They asked the parents of 2,567 adolescents about the type of feeding their children received at birth and the time this lasted.

The adolescents also carried out physical tests in order to evaluate several abilities such as aerobic capacities and muscular strength.

The study found that those who were breastfed as babies had stronger leg muscles than those who were not breastfed. Moreover, muscular leg strength was greater in those who had been breastfed for a longer period of time.

Furthermore, this type of feeding, either exclusively or in combination with other types of food, was associated with a better performance in horizontal jumping by boys and girls regardless of other factors such as fat mass, height of the adolescent or the amount of muscle.

The researchers noted that adolescents who were breastfed from three to five months, or for more than six months, had half the risk of low performance in the jump exercise when compared with those who had never been breastfed.

"Until now, no studies have examined the association between breastfeeding and future muscular aptitude. However, our results, which concur with the observations made as regards other neonatal factors, such as weight at birth, are positively related to better muscular condition during adolescence," they said.

The team from the University of Granada added that the results 'suggest further beneficial effects and provide support to breastfeeding as superior to any other type of feeding'.

Details of these findings are published in the *Journal of Nutrition*.

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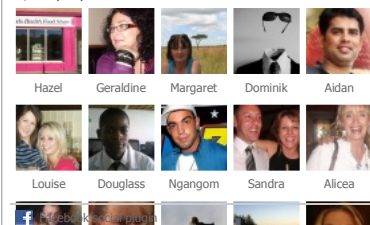
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