



## Inability to breastfeed is associated with depression

A cohort study of 14,000 women in England highlights the need to support new mothers who want to breastfeed but are unable to do so.

Using data from a longitudinal survey, researchers examined how breastfeeding affects a mother's mental health. They analysed how long mothers had breastfed for and how long they had breastfed exclusively. Women who planned to breastfeed but had not managed to were 2.5 times more likely to develop postpartum depression (PPD) than women who had no intention of breastfeeding.

Women who had not planned to breastfeed, but did so exclusively for four weeks, had a significantly reduced risk of PPD when compared to women who had not planned to breastfeed and did not.

The work, carried out by researchers from the Universities of Seville, Cambridge, Essex and London, has been published in the *Maternal and Child Health Journal*.<sup>1</sup> However, as a cohort study, it cannot prove that not breastfeeding causes PPD – it merely shows an association. Furthermore, depression was self-reported and not clinically diagnosed, which is less reliable.

### Reference

1. **Borra C., Lacovou M., Sevilla A.** New evidence on breastfeeding and postpartum depression: the importance of understanding women's intentions. *Mat Child Health J* 2014 doi:10.1007/s10995-014-1591-z.

## MRI reveals brain abnormalities in late preterm infants

Moderate and late preterm (MLPT) infants born at 32-36 weeks' gestation may have smaller brains and other brain abnormalities that could lead to long-term developmental problems, according to a study published online in the journal *Radiology*.<sup>1</sup>

Australian researchers performed magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) on 199 MLPT infants and 50 infants born at term. They compared the size and maturation of multiple brain structures between the two groups and looked for signs of brain injury.

Injury rates were similar between the two groups but MLPT birth was associated with:

- smaller brain size at term-equivalent age

- less myelination in one part of the brain
- immature gyral folding.

Much of the existing knowledge on preterm birth and brain development has been drawn from studies of individuals born very preterm (<32 weeks' gestation). The researchers plan to follow the infants in the study group through childhood to learn more about the relationship between brain abnormalities and later outcomes.

### Reference

1. **Walsh J.M., Doyle L.W., Anderson P.J. et al.** Moderate and late preterm birth: effect on brain size and maturation at term-equivalent age. *Radiology* 2014 doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1148/radiol.14132410.

## Accurate twin pregnancy growth chart data published

The Twins and Multiple Births Association (Tamba) and St George's Hospital, London, have published accurate twin growth charts in the *Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology* journal.<sup>1</sup> The growth charts should improve the identification of intrauterine growth restriction in twins that are at increased risk of premature delivery or stillbirth.

The risk of preterm delivery is much higher in multiple births, with 50% of all twin pregnancies resulting in a premature delivery. "There are no accurate growth charts for twin pregnancies at the moment. Twin babies are measured using singleton charts and clinicians must use their judgement to decide how the pregnancy is progressing," says one of the authors of the study, Consultant Obstetrician Asma Khalil from St George's Hospital.

Data for the development of a robustly constructed growth chart for twin pregnancies came from a cohort study of biometric measurements, collected prospectively, in the second and third trimesters of twin pregnancies by nine hospitals as part of the Southwest Thames Obstetric Research Collaborative (STORK). The final data set included



Dr Asma Khalil, Consultant Obstetrician (centre), with Toby and Marta Kayll and their newborn twins.

9,866 second and third trimester ultrasound examinations in 2,125 pregnancies. The measurements obtained at each examination included head circumference, biparietal diameter, abdominal circumference and femur length in each fetus.

The research was commissioned by Tamba and the twin pregnancy growth charts will be rolled out to all hospitals in the UK over the coming year.

### Reference

1. **Stirrup O.T. et al, on behalf of the Southwest Thames Obstetric Research Collaborative (STORK).** Fetal growth reference ranges in twin pregnancy: analysis of the Southwest Thames Obstetric Research Collaborative (STORK) multiple pregnancy cohort. *Ultrasound Obstet Gynecol* 2014 doi:10.1002/uog.14640.