Breastfeeding and How it Affects Cognitive Development

Kylie Farris  
*Pittsburg State University*

Barbara McClaskey  
*Pittsburg State University*

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Breastfeeding and How it Affects Cognitive Development

Kylie Farris, BSN Student
Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, Pittsburg State University
Barb McClaskey, Ph.D. – Faculty

Clinical Question

In Infants how does breastfeeding compared to formula feeding influence cognitive development over a lifetime?

Abstract

If one was asked “which is better: breastfeeding or formula feeding?” The most common answer would be “breastfeeding.” This would be the answer 9 times out of 10. It is a known fact by a wide range of people, that in general, breastfeeding is the better option. Infants who are breastfed exclusively in the first six months of life tend to have better overall health outcomes than children that are fed only iron-fortified formula or a combination of the two. Therefore, there is potential that breastfeeding will indeed also improve cognitive developmental outcomes. That is the purpose of this study. To compare the cognitive developmental outcomes in infants who are breastfed as opposed to formula fed, and how this will affect them during their lifespan. Breastfeeding is not hard to do or learn. It is the most convenient and has endless benefits for both parties. Still, only a meager one-fourth of all babies are breastfed exclusively to six months of age in the United States. There are components in breast milk that lead researchers to believe that breast milk alone can have enough of an impact to make a difference in cognition. In order to prove this, researchers have done tests to evaluate cognitive abilities. These tests evaluated problem solving and vocabulary, along with many other skills. There are still many uncertainties in the proposed positive outcome that breastfeeding can indeed improve cognitive development. However, if there is any chance that it could play a factor in benefiting the infant, then we should most definitely promote breastfeeding whenever possible.

References