
Study links breastfeeding to high grades, college entry

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) – Breastfed babies seem more likely to do well at high school and to go on to attend college than infants raised on a bottle, according to a new U.S. study.

Professors Joseph Sabia from the American University and Daniel Rees from the University of Colorado Denver based their research on 126 children from 59 families, comparing siblings who were breastfed as infants to others who were not.

By comparing siblings, the study was able to account for the influence of a variety of difficult-to-measure factors such as maternal intelligence and the quality of the home environment.

The study, published in the *Journal of Human Capital*, found that an additional month of breastfeeding was associated with an increase in high school grade point averages of 0.019 points and an increase in the probability of college attendance of 0.014.

"The results of our study suggest that the cognitive and health benefits of breastfeeding may lead to important long-run educational benefits for children," Sabia, a professor of public policy who focuses on health economics, said in a statement.

"But this is just a start. Much work remains to be done to establish a definitive causal link."

Sabia said the study, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, was the first to use sibling data in order to examine the effect of breastfeeding on high school completion and college attendance.

"By focusing on differences between siblings, we can rule out the possibility that family-level factors such as socioeconomic status are driving the relationship between having been breastfed and educational attainment," said Rees, an economics professor.
