

Publication Summary



Breastfeeding Statistics

Financial Year 2013/14

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About this Release

Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding is recognised as an important public health activity. There is good evidence that breastfeeding in infancy has a protective effect against many childhood illnesses. Breastfeeding rates in Scotland are monitored and published annually. Statistics are presented by NHS Board, Community Health Partnership and also by maternal age, deprivation and smoking status. This release provides an update of breastfeeding statistics to include data for babies born in the financial year 2013/14.

Key Points

- Across Scotland, the overall breastfeeding rate has remained at a broadly similar level over the last decade. There have been slight increases in the rate at the first visit (around 10 days of age) in more recent years due to an increase in mixed feeding where the baby is fed both breast and formula milk.
- In 2013/14, 48.4% of babies were breastfed at the first visit, falling to 37.9% at the 6–8 week review.
- There has been an increase in overall breastfeeding rates in the most deprived areas at the first visit over the last decade though there remains a clear association between breastfeeding and deprivation. Mothers in the least deprived areas were nearly three times as likely to exclusively breastfeed at 6-8 weeks compared with mothers in the most deprived areas.
- Non-smoking mothers were around three times as likely to exclusively breastfeed as mothers who smoke at the first visit. This is likely to be a reflection of an association between smoking and other social and cultural factors. In 2013/14, 39.6% of non-smoking mothers exclusively breastfed their babies, compared with 13.7% of mothers who smoked.
- Breastfeeding rates vary by geographical area. There are a range of possible reasons for this, including differences of deprivation in the area, local practice in maternity

hospitals and primary care teams. A small proportion of this variation may be accounted for by differences in the timing of the 6-8 week review between NHS Boards. The timing of the 6-8 week review is important to consider as there is a known drop-off in breastfeeding rates with time i.e. breastfeeding rates decrease with increasing age of child at the review.

Background

Nutrition plays a crucial role in the early months and years of life and is important in achieving optimal health. "Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action" was published by the Scottish Government in January 2011. It outlines actions which can be taken by NHS Boards, local authorities and others to improve the nutrition of pregnant women, babies and young children in Scotland. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding is a key component of this framework as breastfeeding rates are low in Scotland.

Breastfed infants are likely to have a reduced risk of infection, particularly those affecting the ear, respiratory tract and gastro-intestinal tract. This protective effect is particularly marked in low birth weight infants. Other probable benefits include improved cognitive and psychological development, and a reduced risk of childhood obesity. There is evidence that women who breastfed have lower risks of breast cancer, epithelial ovarian cancer and hip fracture later in life.

The information is derived from data collected at routine child health reviews at around 10 days and 6-8 weeks of age, and recorded on the Child Health Systems Programme Pre-School system (CHSP Pre-School).

Contact

Dr Rachael Wood
Consultant in Public Health Medicine
rachaelwood@nhs.net

0131 275 7028

Calum MacDonald
Principal Information Analyst
calum.macdonald@nhs.net

0131 275 7656

Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Full Publication Report](#).

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