

The Perceived Effect of Breastfeeding on Breast Aesthetics: Does it Affect Breastfeeding Success in Women with Breast Augmentation?

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Introduction: It has been suggested that in women who had breast augmentation the success of breastfeeding might be affected by the perception of how this could alter the appearance of the breasts. However, the available evidence indicates that breast ptosis increases with each pregnancy, but breastfeeding does not seem to worsen these effects.(1-2)

Method: A clinical study was designed to evaluate if the perceived effect of breastfeeding on breast aesthetics affected the success of breastfeeding in women with breast augmentation. In this study 160 women participated all of whom had breast augmentation with saline-filled implants in a subpectoral position. The inclusion criteria for the study were: no reported loss of nipple sensation, having had a live birth (non-operative delivery) subsequent to the breast augmentation, and having followed recommended good breastfeeding practices. The breastfeeding practices required for inclusion of the participant in the study were: attempting breastfeeding on a schedule, not supplementing with formula during the first few days, and not offering pacifiers to the baby on a regular basis during the initial days. The study controlled these variables because they are known to significantly decrease the success of breastfeeding. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data on demographics, breastfeeding success, implant information and perception of how breastfeeding affected the appearance of the breast. For our study a period of two weeks or more was chosen as the defining duration of a successful breastfeeding attempt.

Results: The group that was successful at breastfeeding (n=63) was not significantly different from the non-successful group (n=97) in age (24 ± 6 vs. 25 ± 7), body mass index (22 ± 3 vs. 23 ± 2), implant size (325 ± 35 vs. 300 ± 40) or incision location (40% vs. 35% periareolar). However, the groups were significantly different ($p<0.05$) regarding the perception that breastfeeding adversely affects the appearance of the breast (Table 1).

Breastfeeding	Believed breastfeeding adversely affects breast appearance
Successful Group (n=63)	13 %
Unsuccessful Group (n=97)	86%

Table 1. Perceived adverse aesthetic effect.

Conclusion: A woman's perception of how breastfeeding affects the appearance of the breasts significantly influences the success of breastfeeding.

References:

1. Rinker B, Veneracion M, Walsh CP. The effect of breastfeeding on breast aesthetics. *Aesthet Surg J.* 28:534-7, 2008.
2. Pisacane A, Continisio P. Breastfeeding and perceived changes in the appearance of the breast: a retrospective study. *Acta Paediatr.* 93:1346-8, 2004.