

### **Motivators and barriers to breastfeeding in a mainly Māori community in New Zealand.**

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**Background:** Breastfeeding has many well established benefits for infant health as well as impacting on later cognitive ability and educational achievement. The age of cessation of breastfeeding is lower in many indigenous populations compared to non-indigenous populations suggesting there may be cultural specific influences.

**Objective:** to identify the motivators and barriers to breastfeeding in a mainly Māori community in New Zealand. **Methods:** Mothers from midwifery practices serving mainly Māori families were recruited for a randomised controlled study investigating the risks and benefits of an infant sleep device (wahakura) compared to a bassinet. Questionnaires were administered at baseline (pregnancy) and at one, three and six months postnatal. Several questions relating to breastfeeding and factors associated with breastfeeding were included. Data were pooled to examine predictors of breastfeeding duration. **Results:** Māori comprised 71% of the 197 participants recruited. Māori women were twice as likely to breastfeed for a shorter duration than New Zealand European women. Key predictors for extended duration of breastfeeding were the strong support of the mother's partner or her mother for breastfeeding and being an older mother. Key predictors for shorter breastfeeding were pacifier use, daily cigarette smoking, alcohol use and living in a more deprived area. **Conclusion:** These results can inform more targeted antenatal and postnatal breastfeeding education for Māori women and their whanau (family). Breastfeeding among Māori mothers could be enhanced by involving women's partners and their mothers in support of breastfeeding and by addressing smoking, alcohol and pacifier use.