Breast-feeding in women with hypertensive disorders in pregnancy.

AIMS: Breast feeding is particularly important and difficult in children born prematurely, especially after hypertensive diseases in pregnancies (HDP). Therefore, we aimed to investigate breast feeding in women who developed HDP.

METHODS: Data on breast-feeding was collected within a nationwide research project on psychosocial factors in HDP. A self-administered questionnaire was given to 2600 women with a suspected history of HDP and 1233 controls. After matching and confirming diagnosis according to ISSHP criteria, 877 women with HDP and 623 controls were included into the study.

RESULTS: Control women initiated (48.9/39.2%; P<0.001) and continued (42.2/37.2%; P<0.005) breast-feeding significantly more often than women with HDP. This holds particularly for women who developed HELLP syndrome (48.9/34.7%; P<0.0001, 42.2/33.5%; P<0.0001). A delivery before the 32(nd) gestational week (19.5/81.8%; P<0.0001) and a birth weight of less than 1500 g (18.8/75%; P<0.0001) were associated with the decision not to breast-feed.

CONCLUSIONS: Women affected by HDP breast fed significantly less often than control women. This effect is at least partly caused by the increased rate of prematurity. Encouraging and supporting these women in breast-feeding is important to improve neonatal physical and mental development.

J Perinat Med