BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE: Children born to mothers with gestational diabetes are at an increased risk of developing obesity. Breastfeeding is acknowledged as beneficial for child development and it is suggested that breastfeeding protects against becoming obese. The aim of this study was to document breastfeeding habits of women with gestational diabetes and to identify factors that affect breastfeeding habits. METHODS: Breastfeeding habits (breastfeeding of any duration) were recorded of 257 mothers with gestational diabetes (mean age 31.4 +/- 4.8 years) who participated in a prospective post-partum study between 1989 and 1999 and compared to breastfeeding habits of 527 healthy mothers (mean age 30.3 +/- 4.2 years), all enrolled in the prospective BABYDIAB study between the years 1989 and 2000. Breastfeeding data were prospectively obtained by questionnaire and interview. RESULTS: Compared to children of healthy mothers, fewer children of mothers with gestational diabetes were breastfed (75% vs 86%; P<0.01) and for a shorter duration than women with a BMI<30 kg/m2 (any breastfeeding 12 weeks. vs. 17 weeks; P=0.02). The type of DM therapy independently correlated with reduced breastfeeding duration (HR 1.7; P=0<0.01). CONCLUSIONS: Mothers with gestational diabetes, especially mothers with insulin-dependent gestational diabetes, and obese mothers...
breastfed their children significantly less and for a shorter duration than healthy mothers. These findings could explain the higher risk of their children developing obesity later in life and should be considered when counselling women with gestational diabetes.