

Title: The Effect of LATCH on Mothers' Perception of their Initial Breast Feeding Experience

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose and Rationale: The lack of a standardized approach to educating/supporting new mothers with breastfeeding (BF) may contribute to poor BF first impressions and negatively affect BF exclusivity and duration. Purpose: To examine the effect that LATCH (evidence-based BF protocol), provided during the fourth stage of labor, has on primigravidas' initial BF experience.

Research Questions

1. Is LATCH associated with whether the initial BF experience of mothers matches what they expected it to be?
2. Does implementation of LATCH improve mothers' BF perceptions, physical comfort, and trouble with initial latch?
3. Is LATCH associated with whether mothers like BF for the first time?

Synthesis of Literature: The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative promotes exclusive BF for the first 6 months of infants' lives. The United States BF initiation rate for the early postpartum period is 74.6%, which declines to 44.3% at six months. Nurses provide 75% of the BF support. The type of BF support facilitates mothers' BF or contributes to its cessation.

Methods/Procedures: We used a pre-post intervention, two-sample study design with a convenience sample of 130 primigravidas admitted to the Labor and Birth Unit of a large Magnet hospital. Mothers (n=64) in the pre-LATCH group received usual BF support. Nurses were then educated about the LATCH protocol and were observed implementing LATCH for the first time to assure intervention fidelity. Mothers were then enrolled into the post-LATCH group (n=66). After obtaining written consent, mothers in both groups completed a pre-post delivery BF experience survey.

Results: The groups were equivalent with a mean age of 30 years. Most were white, married, planned to BF, had similar sources of BF information, and had a spontaneous vaginal delivery.

Question #1: In the pre-LATCH group, perceptions of liking BF for the first time before vs. after the experience matched (80% vs. 81%, $p=.20$), whereas, in the post-LATCH group, these perceptions did not match. Mothers' before BF perceptions increased significantly after BF (78.5% vs. 84.4%, $p<.001$).

Question #2: In the post-LATCH group, compared with the pre-LATCH group there was an increase in the proportion of mothers agreeing with “Nurses helped me prepare for BF” (94% vs. 81%, $p=.03$). About 75% of moms from both groups were comfortable during BF. Fewer babies in the post-LATCH group never latched, compared with the pre-LATCH group (4.8% vs. 20%, $p=.01$). Trouble with latch was resolved more often with nurse’s help in the post-LATCH group, compared with the pre-LATCH group (4.8% vs. 11.7%, $p=.001$).

Question #3: Eighty percent of moms in the pre-LATCH group, compared with 84.4% in the post-Latch group indicated that they liked BF for the first time. This difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion/Application to Practice: Mothers having trouble during their first BF experience are at risk for not continuing BF. The LATCH intervention had several significant positive effects on mothers’ BF perceptions and experiences. LATCH can be easily adopted by other Labor and Birth nurses to minimize trouble with latching and heighten mothers’ confidence during their first BF experience.