

The iCare Study: Examining Infant Feeding and Caregiving Practices among First-Time Mothers

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Background:

Being a first-time mother comes with a host of new experiences. These experiences can be very rewarding, but they can also introduce many new stressors. During pregnancy and thereafter, first-time mothers are grappling with numerous physical, physiological, and psychological changes that influence the views they have about themselves, their partners, and their larger social context. This is also a time when mothers are experiencing a wave of emotions and quickly learning what it means to be a mother. These changes, which are occurring throughout pregnancy, may leave women more or less prepared to face the challenges of rearing an infant for the first time. The decisions that mothers make in infancy regarding caregiving have long-lasting consequences for their child's health and wellness. Choosing to breastfeed and engaging in sensitive parenting are two behavioral attributes that are known to contribute significantly to maternal and infant wellness. These behaviors can be particularly challenging for first-time mothers who are still developing the knowledge and skills associated with parenthood.



AIM: *To promote breastfeeding and sensitive caregiving in first-time mothers.*

GOALS	
Short-Term	Long-Term
To explore attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge about infant feeding practices in order to understand how to best target interventions to the need of the local population.	To increase breastfeeding duration in first-time mothers, especially within disadvantaged groups.
To understand how family of origin experiences, beliefs about parenting, and the ability to handle frustration influence first-time mothers' capacity to provide sensitive care for her infant.	To increase sensitive caregiving among mothers in the community especially those facing adversity, such as poverty and mental and physical health challenges.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ 1: For local first-time mothers, what are the facilitators and barriers associated with breastfeeding and sensitive caregiving?

RQ 2: Are there significant differences in breastfeeding duration and sensitive caregiving between vulnerable and non-vulnerable mothers?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between sensitive caregiving and breastfeeding?

RQ4: How are some vulnerable mothers able to breastfeed and provide sensitive caregiving despite facing considerable adversity?

MIXED-METHODS APPROACH

Qualitative: Interviews to gain greater understanding of the emotional, cognitive, and physical elements that accompany first-time motherhood.

Quantitative: Questionnaires, observations, structured tasks pertaining to psychological aspects (cognitive and emotional) of breastfeeding and sensitive caregiving.

Participants Characteristics:

- ✓ First-time mothers
- ✓ Age >18 years
- ✓ English speaking

Recruitment:

Sample Size:

- Target Recruitment Size: N=150
- Target Participation Size: N=100

Time Frame:

- First-time moms in Second Trimester (3-6mos pregnant); recruit during this time so that families are enrolled in the study prior to assessment Time 1.

Strategies:

1. Recruitment materials are placed at healthcare practices, maternity care centers, and other areas of the community. Participants text icarestudy@uncc.edu to express interest in the study. Study staff follows-up with participant within 24hours.
2. Recruitment materials may also be placed on a website or disseminated via social media platforms.

Participant Consent:

1. Screen by phone to ensure eligibility (verbal consent)
2. Obtain written consent at the beginning of the first home visit during Time 1

Assessment

Duration: Approximately 9 months with assessment points in third trimester of pregnancy through child age 6 months.

Time 1:	Third Trimester (7-10mos pregnant)
Participant:	First-Time Mothers
Mode:	Questionnaires+Interviews+Task-based Assessments
Length:	1.5-hours
Location:	Participant home or UNCC
Incentive:	\$20 gift card

Time 2:	1-Month Postpartum
Participant:	First-Time Mothers
Mode:	Questionnaires + Interviews
Length:	45 min
Location:	Participant home or phone call
Incentive:	\$10 gift card

Time 3:	3-Months Postpartum
Participant:	First-Time Mothers
Mode:	Questionnaires + Interviews
Length:	45 min
Location:	Participant home or phone call
Incentive:	\$10 gift card

Time 4:	6-Months Postpartum
Participant:	First-Time Mothers
Mode:	Questionnaires + Interviews + Task-based assessment
Length:	1.5-hours
Location:	Participant home or UNCC
Incentive:	\$20 gift card, plus \$10 additional for participants who completed all four assessments.