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Decreasing childhood obesity with exclusive breastfeeding for six months

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In the United States, one in five children are obese, therefore it is a major public health concern. Extra weight increases a child's risk of developing numerous health ailments including depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Many research studies have focused on determining the most effective method to prevent this epidemic. Common recommendations include a healthy maternal diet and regular exercise but the percentage of overweight children continues to climb. Breastfeeding has also been suggested as an approach to impede weight gain in children. This literature review aims to determine if exclusive breastfeeding for six months compared to formula feeding will reduce obesity in children aged 2 to 18. Current, peer-reviewed research studies published between 2013-2018 were analyzed to establish the relationship between these variables. The majority of the research found that breastfeeding compared to formula feeding promotes a healthy weight in children. Additionally, the evidence supports delaying solid food introduction until at least six months to encourage children to develop internal satiety cues. The research is limited by inadequate subject diversity and difficulties managing confounders that may also impact a child's weight. This review adds to the ever-growing body of nursing knowledge and hopes to inspire further research into the impact of exclusive breastfeeding and delayed solid food introduction on childhood obesity.

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