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Breastfeeding Found to Reduce Risk of Rheumatoid Arthritis

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RALEIGH, N.C. --- It may be time to add another important benefit to the long list of health reasons for women to breastfeed their infants. An article published online Jan. 6 of this month in the clinical journal *Rheumatology* found a strong association between breastfeeding and reduction of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) in a sample of over 7,000 women from South China. RA strikes many more women than men and often has a devastating effect on quality of life, household income, and health care costs.

While most people are aware that breastfeeding offers infants protection from acute and chronic illnesses such as ear infections, gastrointestinal disturbances, obesity, diabetes, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, fewer are aware that breastfeeding protects mothers, as well. Breastfeeding decreases the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, cardiovascular disease, and rheumatoid arthritis.

While breastfeeding is natural, it does not always come easily for every mother and child. International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) are the internationally credentialed health care professionals trained to help families meet their breastfeeding goals. For more information or to find an IBCLC in your area, visit www.USLCA.org.

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