

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR ΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΕΚΔΟΤΗ

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ΑΡΧΕΙΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ 2019, 36(4):557–558

### Is there a place for maternal avoidance diets during exclusive breastfeeding? Implications for midwifery practice

Jeurink and colleagues recently published a critical review of the recent literature on the importance of exposure of the exclusively breastfeeding neonate to maternal dietary proteins in the establishment of early immunological tolerance, and hence the prevention of allergic disease in adult life.<sup>1</sup> They reported that it is common practice in many countries to exclude certain foods with allergenic potential from the maternal diet of nursing mothers, due to exaggerated fears of inducing an allergic response in the newborn infant. Their review highlighted the fact that exclusion diets are counterproductive for many reasons; they can lead to nutrient deficiencies, they can exhaust nursing mothers, and they may even trigger an emotional crisis, where breastfeeding is abandoned earlier than originally intended. The reviewers concluded that there is no solid evidence that allergic disease can be prevented with the exclusion of specific maternal dietary proteins during lactation. Conversely, a varied maternal diet

helps the developing infant to “train” its immune system to gain better immune tolerance. The only documented exception to this is when there is a proven food allergy in the breastfeeding infant, in which case elimination of the identified food item from the maternal diet is indicated.

The information provided in this review is clinically important, and highly relevant to current midwifery practice.<sup>1</sup> The evidence used in the review was derived from the Cochrane database<sup>2</sup> and the core scientific knowledge on which the latest guidelines of the relevant professional societies in various different countries was based.<sup>3,4</sup> The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in 2015 issued a quality statement that women should receive support from a service that is evidence-based when being informed of the benefits of breastfeeding.<sup>5</sup> In line with this statement, this recent critical review<sup>1</sup> may help clarify the current confusion about the allergenic propensities of maternal dietary proteins during early life and assist midwives in providing the best strategy to prevent the onset of allergic diseases from early life, by promoting breastfeeding with no maternal dietary restrictions.

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#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

**Υπάρχει λόγος για δίαιτα αποκλεισμού κατά τη διάρκεια της γαλουχίας;  
Εφαρμογές στη μαιευτική κλινική πράξη**

A. ΑΝΤΩΝΑΚΟΥ

*Τμήμα Μαιευτικής, Αλεξάνδρειο Τεχνολογικό Εκπαιδευτικό Ίδρυμα Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεσσαλονίκη*

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**Λέξεις ευρητηρίου:** Ανοσοποιητικό σύστημα, Δίαιτα αποκλεισμού, Διατροφή μητέρας, Θηλασμός

## References

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