

- [Freed GL.](#)
- [Fralely JK.](#)
- [Schanler RJ.](#)

Accuracy of expectant mothers' predictions of fathers' attitudes regarding breast-feeding.

Division of Community Pediatrics, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 27599-7590.

BACKGROUND. Breast-feeding plays a well-recognized role in lowering infant morbidity and mortality during the first year of life. Previous research has demonstrated that fathers contribute to the decision of which infant feeding method will be used, and can be effective promoters of breast-feeding. A woman's decision to breast-feed her infant may rest on her assumptions of the father's attitude regarding this feeding method. As the perception of a negative paternal attitude toward breast-feeding may discourage some women from breast-feeding, this study was designed to determine whether a mother can accurately predict the father's attitude on this subject.

METHODS. Subjects were 268 pairs of expectant mothers and fathers enrolled in childbirth preparation classes at five private hospitals in Houston, Texas. Participants individually completed pretested surveys assessing their attitudes regarding breast-feeding. Mothers' surveys additionally assessed their partner's attitudes toward breast-feeding.

RESULTS. More mothers than fathers reported exclusive breast-feeding as their preferred feeding plan (69% vs 58%), whereas only 54% of partners both responded they preferred breast-feeding. Overall, fathers had more favorable attitudes toward breast-feeding than their partners predicted, but large numbers of fathers harbored misconceptions and negative attitudes toward breast-feeding. Mothers' predictions were little more accurate than random guessing in predicting their partner's response (range: 56% to 83%).

CONCLUSIONS. A mother's perception of her partner's attitudes toward breast-feeding influences her choice of infant feeding method. If she perceives that the father has a negative attitude about breast-feeding, she will probably not choose this method. Additional efforts to dispel misconceptions about breast-feeding should be made during childbirth preparation classes and prenatal visits.

PMID: 8336095 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]