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A controlled trial of the father's role in breastfeeding promotion.

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OBJECTIVE: To investigate whether supporting fathers to recognize the relevance of their role in the success of breastfeeding and teaching them how to prevent and to manage the most common lactation problems would result in more women breastfeeding. **METHODS:** A controlled trial, in which the participating fathers were allocated in 2-month blocks to a child care training session, was conducted of 280 mothers considering breastfeeding and their 280 partners at a university obstetric department in Naples, Italy. Support and advice about breastfeeding was provided to all of the mothers. Among the fathers of the intervention group, the training session included the management of breastfeeding; among those of the control group, it did not. Primary outcome was the prevalence of full breastfeeding at 6 months. Secondary outcomes were the proportion of women who perceived their milk to be insufficient, who stopped breastfeeding because of problems, and who reported to have received help in breastfeeding management by their partners. **RESULTS:** The prevalence of full breastfeeding at 6 months was 25% (35 of 140) in the intervention group and 15% (21 of 140) in the control group and that of any breastfeeding at 12 months was 19% (27) and 11% (16), respectively. Perceived milk insufficiency was significantly more frequent among the mothers of the control group (38 [27%] of 140 vs 12 [8.6%] of 140), as well as breastfeeding interruption because of problems with lactation (25 [18%] of 140 vs 6 [4%] of 140). Moreover, significantly more women in the intervention group reported receiving support and relevant help with infant feeding management from their partners (128 [91%] of 140 vs 48 [34%] of 140). Among the women who had reported difficulties with lactation in the intervention and control groups (96 [69%] and 89 [64%], respectively), the prevalence of full breastfeeding at 6 months was 24% and 4.5%, respectively. **CONCLUSIONS:** Teaching fathers how to prevent and to manage the most common lactation difficulties is associated with higher rates of full breastfeeding at 6 months. PMID: 16199676 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]