

## IMPROVED FEEDING INTERACTION AND INFANT FEEDING HABITS WITH VERY EARLY PARENT TRAINING

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**Objective:** Childhood obesity, poor eating habits, and eating problems are increasing. Parents are often at a loss about how to tackle these problems. This study examined whether professional behavioral and nutritional training for first-time mothers can improve feeding interaction and infant eating habits at the age of 12 months.

**Methods & Participants:** Participants were 128 mother-infant dyads: 86 in the intervention group and 42 controls. Mother's age was M=30 years (+2.6), with M=16 (+2.2) years of education. Intervention group received Mother Infant Feeding Interaction (MI-FI) training: four weekly workshops for mothers when infants were 4-6 months, followed by continued internet-based support by pediatric dietitian and social worker until infants reached 12 months. Control group received municipal well-baby clinic's standard mother-infant support. We assessed mothers' tolerance to ambiguity and feeding-related reports. Blinded coders evaluated videotaped home mealtime interactions (age 12 months) using Chatoor Feeding Scale (CFS).

**Results:** Significant inter-group differences emerged in mealtime interactions for four of the five CFS dimensions: dyadic conflict (MI-FI=4.69 vs. control=8.38), talk and distraction (3.75 vs. 4.90), struggle for control (2.30 vs. 4.88), and maternal non-contingency (1.61 vs. 2.75). Findings indicated significantly more positive mother-infant mealtime interactions and maternal responses to infant cues in the MI-FI group than in controls.

**Conclusion:** Very early maternal training may support development of more positive mother-infant feeding interactions. This may contribute to preserved internal hunger and satiety, improved eating habits, and prevention of future eating disorders and obesity. Long-term follow-up may optimize training for specific target populations.

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