

## Early Initiation of Breastfeeding among Postpartum Mothers at Two Rwandan Hospitals

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**Abstract :** Background: Breastfeeding in the first hour post-birth can decrease neonatal morbidity and mortality. Disease prevention and health outcomes differ immensely between newborns who receive human milk and those who do not. Rwanda has high breastfeeding rates, though factors associated with early initiation of breastfeeding (EIBF) are unknown. Objective: To assess factors associated with EIBF among mothers in immediate postpartum units at two hospitals. Methods: A cross-sectional study design and a convenience sample of 187 mothers were used. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. A Chi-square test showed the relationship between EIBF and sociodemographic factors. Results: The findings showed less than one quarter (20.5%) breastfed within the first hour after birth. The majority was < 25 years (52.4%), had some primary education (27.7%) employed (66.7%), urban dweller (58.1%), attendance of one ANC visit or more (81.3%), vaginal birth (58.8%), and did not receive EIBF health education (92.0%). The majority (78.5%) was too tired to initiate breastfeeding, and many supplemented (41.9%) due to perceived insufficient breastmilk. Conclusion: Most mothers did not initiate breastfeeding within the first hour after birth. Sociodemographic factors were associated with EIBF. A program to promote, protect, and support EIBF is urgently needed the community.

**Keywords :** breastfeeding, early initiation, neonates, morbidity, mortality, sub-Saharan Africa

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