

# Breast-Feeding Makes Women 'Mama Bears'

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## *LiveScience:*

Like mama bears ferociously protecting their young, new research suggests human moms, at least those who are breast-feeding, can act more aggressively than others.

In a controlled lab setting, breast-feeding moms were indeed more aggressive toward people who were rude to them.

“Breast-feeding mothers aren’t going to go out and get into bar fights, but if someone is threatening them or their infant, our research suggests they may be more likely to defend themselves in an aggressive manner,” study researcher Jennifer Hahn-Holbrook, of the University of California in Los Angeles, said in a statement.

The study is small, and Hahn-Holbrook is currently planning to replicate her results in a larger group of women.

Facing fears

Hahn-Holbrook and her colleagues suggest the same mechanism that gives mother bears and other lactating animals the resolve to aggressively protect their young may also apply to humans.

The researchers found that breast-feeding moms showed lower blood pressures than formula-feeding moms and non-mothers did. This lowered state of anxiety (and fear) may, in turn, may give women the extra courage to protect themselves and their young. Supporting this connection, the researchers didn’t see any increase in aggression in mothers who bottle-fed formula to their babies.

“Breast-feeding has many benefits for a baby’s health and immunity, but it seems to also have a little-known benefit for the mother,” said Hahn-Holbrook. “It may be providing mothers with a buffer against the many stressors new moms face, while at the same time giving mothers an extra burst of courage if they need to defend themselves or their child.”

Read the whole story: [LiveScience](#)