

# Breast-feeding moms more aggressive, study says

September 09, 2011

## ***CBS News:***

Girl power? Maybe it should be grrrrl power, at least when it comes to mothers who breast-feed their babies. Nursing moms protect their babies twice as aggressively as their bottle-feeding counterparts, according to a provocative new study.

“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 author Dr. Jennifer Hahn-Holbrook, a UCLA psychologist, said in a written statement.

What explains a phenomenon that some are calling the “mama bear” effect? The study suggests that the act of nursing blunts women’s physiological reaction to perceived threats, tamping down fear and giving them extra courage to defend themselves and their babies.

For the study – published in the September issue of *Psychological Science* – researchers recruited three groups of women: 18 nursing mothers, 17 moms who used formula to feed their infants, and 20 non-mothers. As her baby was taken care of nearby, each woman was pitted against an overtly rude research assistant in a series of computerized time-reaction contests – and encouraged to celebrate each victory by pushing a button to deliver a sound blast.

Read the full story: [CBS News](#)