Supporting Young Parents' Child Feeding Practices

We interviewed 113 young parents (90 mothers, 23 fathers).

The average age of young mothers was 19 years old, and the average age of young fathers was 21.

Parenting Status
- Expecting first child: 13
- One child: 76
- More than one child: 24

Education Level
- Some high school/currently completing high school: 36
- Graduated high school: 19
- Trades/college/university: 2

Key Findings

Young parents are highly motivated to look for child feeding information through print and web sources, friends and family, and service providers. But, sometimes the information they receive from different sources is conflicting.

Information about child feeding is exchanged at Young Parent Programs. Learning and observing in these groups can be helpful to young parents, but they may feel stigmatized.

Supporting young parents’ capabilities to feed their children healthy foods depends on more than expert advice and the implementation of “best practices.” In addition to informational supports, ensuring access to healthy food and supports from family and friends, health care providers and Young Parent Programs is also essential.

“Breast is best?” - Young parents were not always supported to breastfeed. At the same time, those who bottle fed sometimes felt ashamed, stigmatized and unsupported.
Supporting Young Parents Where They're At

- Young parents look for and encounter a lot of information about child feeding.
- Young parents are encouraged to follow “best practices,” such as breastfeeding, but they often do not receive enough supports from family and friends, health care providers, and Young Parent Programs to do so.
- It is important to provide encouragement to young parents as they make decisions about child feeding practices.
- But, giving information or advice is not the same as supporting young parents in their efforts to make the best possible choices for feeding their children.

For more information about young mothers' birth stories, please see:


Link to UBC Pre-print Publication: https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0363925

The Young Parents Study

The Young Parents Study is a five-year research project that seeks to better understand the experiences of young parents (aged 15-24) with a variety of health, education, and social service interventions and policies. It involves interviews and fieldwork at young parent programs in Prince George and Greater Vancouver, British Columbia. The study aims to gather information that can be used to improve services and supports for young parents both locally and provincially.

This study is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and led by Dr. Jeannie Shoveller of UBC’s School of Population and Public Health.

For more information about the Young Parents Study, please visit our website: http://youthsexualhealth.ubc.ca/our_research/investigating-the-influences-of-social-context-and-structure-on-young-peoples-parenting-experiences/

Thank You.