

Abstract

One of the most important relationships in our lives is the bond between mother and child. A considerable amount of studies have shown that olfaction plays an important role in establishing this bond. As previous research already demonstrated, mothers who spend more time with their children and form a closer relationship with them are better at recognizing their child's body odor. Similarly, newborns are relatively successful at recognizing the smell of their mother, the smell of their mother's breast and the scent of their own amniotic fluid. These scents, compared to others, are not only more preferred by newborns but also appear soothing for them. Moreover, the smell of mother's breast plays a crucial role in starting of breastfeeding. The environment in utero is rather deprived of auditory and visual stimuli and thus olfactory cues play an important role in this ontogeny phase. It has been shown that prenatal exposure to odorants through amniotic fluid affects subsequent reactions of children. The effect is conveyed through food that the mother ingests; these odors are then received more positively than the odors that children were not previously exposed to. This early acquaintance with smells and flavors typical for a specific culture might, to some extent, shape the later eating habits of children.

The aim of this bachelor work is to summarize and critically examine existing evidence of the role of olfactory perception in newborns; specifically, the area of relationship between mother and child and the subsequent shaping of olfactory and taste preferences.