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# **Title: Public Health Benefits of Paid Family Leave for Parental- Infant Bonding**

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**Leaves That Pay**

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# Paid Family Leave Pays Off for Bonding

- Applebaum and Milkman's study shows that PFL
    - Increases parental perceived ability to care for child
    - Doubled the median duration of breastfeeding from 5 to 11 weeks in high quality jobs and from 5 to 9 weeks in low quality jobs.
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# Health Benefits of Maternity Leave Start Prior to Childbirth

- Leave taken Routinely Prior to Childbirth (**Antenatal leave**) Assists Mother's Physical Wellbeing
  - Reduces obstetric complications among mothers delivering term infants
  - Decreases the likelihood of primary cesarean deliveries among women who deliver in the ninth month of pregnancy

## Potential Pathways for Time Off:

- Reduces fatigue and stress
  - Increases tolerance for pain
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# Health Benefits of Antenatal Leave

## □ Linked to Favorable Birth Outcomes

- Decreases odds of a preterm delivery
  - Increases odds of prolonged gestation, especially for women in high strain jobs
  - Decreases perinatal mortality and low birth weight (if leave is paid)
  - All costly outcomes to the mother, the infant, the family and the medical care system suggesting that SDI in California is beneficial for promoting public health.
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# Health Benefits Also Accrue with Postpartum Leave

- *Evidence on Maternal Physical Health:*
  - A leave of at least 12 weeks increases maternal vitality
  - Improves positive ratings of health
  - Increases breastfeeding initiation and duration which is linked to reduced breast cancer risk
  - **But evidence is sparse**
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# Health Benefits of Postpartum Leave

- Evidence on Maternal Mental Health:
  - Reduces short and long term depressive symptoms
  - Reduces anxiety
  - Elevates maternal responsiveness to infant cues
  - Decreases marital dissatisfaction
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# Postpartum Leave Improves Child Health

- Leaves longer than 12 weeks are associated with:
    - Improved physiological and emotional regulation in the infant
    - Fewer externalizing behaviors at age 1
    - Timely number of well-baby check ups
    - Complete immunizations
    - Breastfeeding initiation, establishment and longer duration
    - Decreases in infant mortality (paid leave)
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# Evidence on the Importance of Leave for Fathers

- Promotes bonding with the infant
- Improves gender equity

But evidence is very limited

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# Optimal Leave Arrangements?

- We really don't know what is the optimal length of leave for family health.
  - Emerging evidence suggests that maternity leave starting prior to delivery can improve health outcomes.
  - Full recovery from birth can take up to 6 months or longer and is influenced by maternal health and behaviors, infant health and behaviors, partner support, community, and policy support.
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# Optimal Leave arrangements?

- Although it is hard to disentangle the effects of each of these actors, it is clear that research evidence suggests that paid leave has positive effects on health outcomes.
  - No wonder that more needs to be done to promote uptake of parental leave in California and elsewhere in the US!!
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