



Pure new wool



Woolblendmark

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PREMATURE BABIES GROW FASTER ON LAMBSWOOL

LONDON - Premature babies grow faster when nursed on lambswool pile nursing pads rather than ordinary cotton sheets.

This is the result of a study conducted by researchers Stephen Scott, Penny Lucas, Tim Cole and Martin Richards of Cambridge University's Child Care and Development Group and the MRC Dunn Nutrition Unit, Cambridge, which was reported in the British medical publication, the Lancet, on October 29, 1983.

The weight gain for periods when babies were well showed a significant increase for the wool group - 22.7 grams a day for wool compared with 18.6 grams a day for cotton. The overall weight gain figures including periods of illness revealed similar results in favour of wool - 21.5 grams a day compared with 18.2 grams a day. These findings confirm a pilot study by the same group which was reported in the Lancet in 1979.

In the full-scale study, which was supported by a grant from the Wool Foundation, 34 low-weight babies (mean weight 1143 grams) were randomly assigned to be continuously nursed - naked except for nappies (diapers) - on lambswool pile pads specifically designed for nursing babies or ordinary cotton sheets.

The criteria for the babies entered in the study were that they
1) no longer required artificial ventilation or intravenous

therapy, 2) weighed less than 1425 grams and were no more than 31 days old and 3) had been gaining weight for two consecutive days.

As far as is known babies in both groups were treated in exactly the same way by nursing staff. None of the researchers was responsible for the care of the babies.

There was no significant difference between groups in the proportion of time during which the babies were well.

Birth weight, weight and age when entered in the study and the sex of the infant had no effect on weight gain.

No untoward effects from being nursed on wool were observed. In particular, no baby was found with wool fibres in its mouth or nose.

It is thought by the researchers that the beneficial effect of wool is likely to be due to the texture which has a calming effect on infants similar to swaddling. However, researchers in the Cambridge group who have had some experience in the unit with similarly constructed pile fabrics made of synthetics do not consider them to be as suitable as wool because the skin of babies laying on them often becomes damp and synthetics do not absorb body moisture like wool.

The implications of using wool are important because it promotes faster growth so that discharge from hospital can be sooner. This releases cots for others and reduces the disruptive effect of hospitalization on the parent-child relationship.

For further information:

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