

Importance of Feeding to an Infant



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Abstract

Breast feeding is the ideal form of infant feeding and is crucial for life long health and well being. It provides unique nutritional, immuninological, psychological and child spacing benefits. Artificial feeding exposes the infant to infection which can lead to mortality. Breast feeding is natural and physiological and has numerous benefits to mother and child. The current infant feeding practices are far from optimum because of lack of knowledge and training in the mothers, misconceptions in the communities, misinformation by infant food manufactures and lack of community and family support. In Nepal, the infant mortality rate is 48/1000 live birth and each year in Nepal, more than 50,000 children die and malnutrition is the underlying cause that accounts for 60% of these deaths. Effective breast feeding alone can reduce 16% of Nepal's child mortality (UNICEF/NDHS 2006).

World Health Organization had emphasized the value of breastfeeding for mothers as well as children. This organization had recommended exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and then supplemented breastfeeding for at least one year and up to two years or more.

Therefore, every mother is responsible for her child's health and should know the benefit of own breast feeding rather than artificial feeding and she should have enough support by family and community to bring it into practice.

Introduction

Breast milk is the best food for the infant. It comes out at the right temperature, it is the correct consistency, sterile, and filled with nutrients. It also consists immunoglobulin that protects infants from many kinds of diseases. Moreover, breast feeding is major component of psychological support that is essential for the growth and development of infants. World Health Organization has recommended that all babies be exclusively breast-fed till the age of six months. Breast milk is naturally made for infants which is easily digestible, and is the best food even for preterm infants. Despite the efforts made by pharmaceutical companies, to add different trace elements and nutrients artificially and expensively added, no tinned formula is a match for breast milk. So all lactating mothers need to be taught and encouragee for successful breast feeding for their infants.

Technique of giving Breast feeding

The mother should feel comfortable and should be free of stress at the time of breast feeding. Privacy is required for breast feeding. The position needs to be comfortable with rest and support for the back and arms. Before feeding the baby, and the mother should change

the soil napkins and wash her hands thoroughly with soap and water and rinse by clean water.

Nature has given infants breast milk by birth, and instinct breast searching reflex is called “rooting reflex”. If pressure is gently applied to one cheek, they will turn towards the source of pressure. If

both the cheeks are pressed in an effort to make them hold the nipple, the infant gets confused and refuses to



reach for the nipple. Once the infant attaches itself to the breast, there will be rhythmic sucking and swallowing. While feeding the infant the mother should know that her areola (black part) of breast nipple completely inside the baby's mouth, it helps on milk ejection while baby give pressure by lips for sucking the breast milk. When the first breast is empty or the infant stops feeding, give feeding by second breast till the baby is sucking or not going in deep sleep. Fore-milk, at the beginning of the feed, differs from hind-milk. The fore-milk is more generous in quantity but more diluted. The hind-milk gives full satisfaction to the infant because it contains high calories rather than the fore-milk. It is delivered at the end of the feeding and infants become very satisfy and goes into deep sleep after having hind milk in adequate volume. Gently burping is needed after feeding to remove any swallowed air and prevent colicky abdominal pains later in the day.

Instead of the baby crying with hunger and frustration, it is better to note the first signs of hunger such as restlessness or sucking the fingers, and feed immediately. Initially feeding should be “on demand” every two or three hours as required. The breast milk is adequate if the baby is satisfied, contented and gaining weight.

Starting of solid food

Breast feeding alone is sufficient food for only first six months then solid food is required. Weaning can be started at after six month, to promote adequate velocity of growth for the infant. In this period the baby has to develop sufficient coordination to move food from the front of the mouth to the back for swallowing. Also the child is learning to eat at this time, it is important to be patient and gentle with the child. Introduction of complementary feeding is a difficult period in the infant's life because if the supplement or substitutes are not adequate in quality and quantity, the child becomes malnourished and unhygienic feeding practices may also results infection and diarrhea.

The best nutritious food for infants is “Sorbotom Lito” because it is easily digestible and does not produce allergies. This food is made of 2 parts protein (soyabian), and 2 parts grain (one part corn and one part wheat) which can be prepare easily in our home and can be brought as readymade packet from the local market. These are easily available foods in any part of our country. The sorbotom pitho (super floor) can be made by cleaning, roasting and grinding separately. It can be stored in an air proof, clean and dry container after mixing all

these things. The lito can be made by boiling the sorbotom pitho in water or milk. A little amount of ghee can be added to make it tasteful and easy to swallow. Adding a little amount of salt or sugar also give more taste on eat for the infant. The lito should be watery or semi liquid and as blind as breast milk. It should be offered in a cup or small bowl with spoon, he may stick his tongue out. This is not rejection of food; it is a “tongue thrust” reflex, which will eventually disappear. Also the baby may lack the coordination to move the cereal to the back of mouth. Do not force – feed. This may result in a long lasting antipathy and rebelliousness (unwillingness) about food, feeding and meal times.

Once the baby is able to swallow the watery gruel, it can be thickened. The number of feeds can be increased keeping pace with the demand. New foods such as boiled egg, different kinds of fruits, boiled and mashed vegetables or ripe bananas can be introduced. New foods should be introduced gradually at weekly intervals. By the first birthday, the baby can eat whatever the rest of the family is eating.

By the age of 10 months, we can give dal, bhat, vegetables, khichadi, roti, meat, egg etc. By the first birthday, the infant can eat whatever the rest of the family is eating, mashed and diced, with the spices reduced. If weaning is delayed for too long, it may pose a problem. The infant becomes old enough to realize that chewing solid food involves more effort than drinking milk and may refuse a change in diet altogether. The mother needs encouragement and education about the process for successful breastfeeding to her infant.

Guidelines

There are certain steps for successful weaning. They are as following:

- Avoid confrontation and force feeding in the lying down position. If the baby dislikes a certain food, try something else. If they shake their head from side to side. It means “enough”.
- Avoid ready –to eat packaged market foods. Home cooked natural food is the best.
- Avoid any biscuits and other readymade non-food like Kukure, sweet foods, popcorn etc because they are preservative fats and flavoring agents.
- Teach the baby to eat ripe bananas, orange etc which are readily available, sterile and easily digestible.
- Avoid allergen foods.

Conclusion

Breast feeding and sorbotom Lito or home cooked foods are the best ideal feeding for the infants therefore the mother should be encouraged to give these nutritious feeding appropriately and timely. Different NGOs and INGOs as well as Governmental bodies should take initiation to educate the mothers, family and community people to strengthen the program of healthy food to have a healthy child and healthy citizen.

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