

Breast feeding practices prevailing in western Rajasthan (urban and rural community)

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ABSTRACT

Breast feeding were assessed by 600 mother's responses using self structured questionnaire. Mother's knowledge regarding breast feeding was recorded. Cause of inappropriate breast feeding practices was ascertained by open ended questions. Individually 61.11% respondents received information about breast feeding from friends in urban community whereas 38.89% in rural community. 85% urban respondents gave colostrum to their children due to the advice of the doctors and health workers in the hospital whereas 60% rural respondents did not give colostrum to their children due to some traditional believes and myths. Individually 86.33% rural respondents fed their babies in either sitting or sleeping position whereas 48.33% urban respondents fed their baby only in sitting position. 45.00% urban respondents continued breast feeding even after one year and 63.67% rural respondents continued breast feeding for same period. Breast feeding was almost proper and knowledge importance of colostrum were known to both in urban and rural mothers.

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Breast feeding is universal in India. During the first 24 hours in the hospital, the baby is usually given boiled water with sugar or diluted milk. The mother's milk does not come between the third and fifth day but in the meantime child may be put to the breast to get practice in sucking and to receive colostrum, the first secretion of the mammary glands. It is a thick, yellowish fluid specially adapted to his needs. It contains less fat and more protein and vitamins. It gives to child some protection against diseases. It also acts as co-laxative but sometimes this combined with the caste oil administered to the mother on the third night, may result in diarrhea for baby and upset him/her unnecessarily, Generally the sucking instinct is very strong in the baby and he takes to the breast without much difficulty. In the beginning, starting with 5-10 minutes, increasing up to 15 minutes at the breast may be enough if the nipples are sore. The baby may be placed on 4-hour feeding schedule or the baby may regulate his own timing. Whether to feed the baby at each feeding to one breast or both depends upon the milk yield and mother's feelings but the baby should be allowed to nurse as long as the child wants and afterwards should be held over the shoulder and patted to make him/her burp. Before and after feeding the baby the breast should be washed with boiled water using a clean cloth to avoid infection.

If the nipples are slightly sore, the doctors should be consulted to avoid further complications and the feeding time should be limited. If a crack develops, a nipple shield may be used while nursing the baby or milk can be extracted through breast pump and given to the baby. Any sore spot in the breast should never be neglected as

later it may develop in to breast abscess. Sometimes, the breast becomes very hard due to excessive supply of milk and it may be difficult to nurse the baby, but gradually itself. However, nursing should not be stopped on this account. Therefore, that advantage of breast-feeding may and may not be over looked.

Breast feeding is natural and hygienically safe:

- Breast milk is pure, easy for babies to digest and always of the right temperature.
- It is nature's food for the infants, supplying more of the nutritional essentials than any other food.
- A breast fed baby is almost never constipated and there is less chance for exposure to certain infections.
- In the earlier stages, breast feeding helps the enlarged uterus to contract easily, and reverts back to its normal position psychologically.
- It helps to develop the maternal instinct in the mother and gives a profound sense of security to the child.
- In a country like India, breast-feeding is more economical than bottle feeding with regard to money time and energy.

If the mother's diet is deficient in protein there is usually a decrease in the flow of milk, while an inadequate intake of minerals may cause a drain on the maternal reserve.

Proper diet is also a peaceful and unhurried life free from worry and tension help in establishing successful lactation. Excitement or worry may sometimes cut down the milk supply temporarily. Sometimes, in spite of the mother's desire for breast feeding her child, she may not