

Research Paper :

Existing infant feeding and weaning practices in an urban setup

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Received : April, 2010; Accepted : July, 2010

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ABSTRACT

Two hundred and four babies (0-12 months) were selected purposively and the information about the feeding and weaning practices followed by their mothers was collected through a questionnaire. Seventy per cent of babies were given prelacteal feed. Most of the mothers (96.57%) initiated breast feeding, out of which 40 per cent of them breastfed their babies within their first day of life. Colostrum was fed to 95.6 per cent of the babies. Only 89 (43.6%) babies were given complementary food whereas 44.9 per cent of these babies were given commercial semi solid foods like Farex and Cerelac. Most commonly given liquid home made foods were *dal* soup, juice and tea followed by semi-solid foods like *Kheer*, banana, *dalia*, *khichri*, curd and boiled potatoes. Almost 80.5 per cent of 41 infants were given commercial milk during 0-3 months of age. Ninety eight (48%) babies were started with bovine milk but it was stopped for four babies after an incidence of diarrhoea. Incidence of diarrhoea was more (50%) in the infants within the age of first three months.

Chhabra, Ritu and Verma, Subhashini (2010). Existing infant feeding and weaning practices in an urban setup, *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 5 (2) : 250-254.

Key words : Feeding and weaning practices, Prelacteal feed, Colostrum and complementary foods

Growth in children is most rapid in the first year of life and is a key indicator of child's health and development. Human baby is expected to thrive on mother's milk which is especially designed by nature. The duration of breast feeding largely determines how much this form of feeding has a favourable influence on the prevention of infectious diseases, child development and survival. In order to achieve optimum development, it is essential that every child gets adequate breast feeding and complementary nutrition at the appropriate age as the physical and mental development of the child is significantly influenced by the feeding and rearing practices.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 204 babies between the age group of 0-1 year was selected from two leading hospitals in Ludhiana city. A questionnaire was developed to collect information about the socio-economic status of the families and feeding and weaning practices followed by the mothers/caretakers. Pretesting of the questionnaire was done on 10 subjects and were excluded from the study sample. The method used for the collection of data was personal interview of the mother or caretaker of the subject. The information was collected from November 2008 to March 2009.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads:

Prelacteal feed:

In the present study, 159 (78%) infants were given prelacteal feeds such as honey, sugar and *gur* (Table 1). Honey was most preferred prelacteal as most of the infants (82.4%) were given honey, *gur* was given to 9.4 per cent followed by sugar (8.2%).

Nayek *et al.* (2006) conducted a study in two hospitals and reported that more than half of the mothers (55.7%) had given prelacteal feeds to their newborn babies. On the other hand, 44.3 per cent mothers used colostrum as first feed for their newborn. Among 334

Table 1: First feed given to the babies

Parameters	Number
Type of feed (n=204)	
Prelacteal feed	159 (78)
Milk feed	45 (22)
Type of prelacteal feed (n=159)	
Honey	131 (82.4)
Sugar	13 (8.2)
Gur	15 (9.4)

* Figures in the parentheses are percent values