

## Infant feeding practices among the rural mothers of Golaghat district of Assam

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■ **ABSTRACT** : The present study was conducted in Golaghat district of Assam. A total of eighty four mothers having children below three years of age were interviewed from four different villages. Out of 130 infants, 21.5 per cent had been given prelacteal feeds. In case of 72.30 per cent of children breast feeding had been initiated within 1 hour and all of them were fed with colostrums. Exclusive breastfeeding was practiced only in 46.92 per cent infants and complementary feeding was started at 6 months for 35.38 per cent. The most common complementary food was milk banana (32.30%) followed by rice flour porridge (26.92%). Only 13.84 per cent of mothers used commercial weaning food. The study showed a strong positive correlation of infant feeding practices with mother's age and educational level.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Breast feeding, Prelacteal feeding, Exclusive breastfeeding, Complementary feeding

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**B**reastfeeding nourishes infant naturally. With a perfectly balanced and easily digestible food sufficient to satisfy the nutritional needs of the newborn for the first six months of life, it also immunizes them with maternal antibodies, helping very effectively to fight off infection. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and timely introduction of weaning foods are important for laying down proper foundation of growth in late childhood. There are various factors that lead to high prevalence of malnutrition in children and among them infant feeding practices is one of the most important (Subba *et al.*, 2007). Various socio-demographic factors play important role in infant feeding practices. Studies reported that mother's age and educational level governs the infant feeding practices (Scott and Binns, 1999). Therefore an effort was made to study the infant feeding practices among the rural mother of Golaghat district of Assam with respect to mothers age and educational level.

### ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was conducted in 4 villages of Podumoni block of Golaghat district during 2010-11. For the

purpose, eighty four mothers having children below three years of age were interviewed. Historic recall method was used to elicit information regarding prelacteal feeding, initiation of breastfeeding. The information on complementary feeding practices was elicited by using 24 hour recall method. The interview was conducted by using a pretested, pre-structured proforma. Correlation study was carried out to find out any relationship between the variables considered under the study.

### ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

All the mothers were literate and most of the mothers (34.62%) had High School education and majority of them were housewives. The mean age of the mothers was 33.23 with a SD of 5.82. Most of the children (86.15%) were delivered in hospital and rest at home in presence of health attendant or *dhai*. All the infants were timely immunized in the concern PHC as per the advice and guidance of ASHA worker.

It is evident from Table 1 that prelacteal feeding was received by 21.5 per cent of the infant which were mostly honey, water and cow's milk. Honey is mostly used for cleaning the tongue of new born as to prepare the infant for