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All about Breastfeeding for Mothers

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Abstract

Breastfeeding is the simple & the best arbitration that is having matchless benefits for mother, baby, family and for society. It should begin within half or one hour after the baby is delivered. Lactating Mothers are supposed to take extra diet in order to have good supply of milk to feed their infants.

Keywords: Breastfeeding; Lactation; Suckle; Boosts

Introduction

“Breast milk is not just a food for babies. It is a living fluid, which protects a baby against infections.” Breast milk is matchless for the neonates as it helps her grow and develop during first years of life. Breastfeeding is the only simple intervention that can prevent a large proportion of neonatal mortality and morbidity. It is the first fundamental right of every child. Breastfeeding improves quality of life by nutritional, immunological, psychological, economic and child spacing benefits to both mother and the child. Exclusive breastfeeding is obligatory for first six months of life and sustained breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond along with complementary feeding after 6 months. Breastfeeding should start within one hour of birth, i.e. golden hour, irrespective of the mode of delivery [1].

Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding magnifies emotional bond between the child and the mother and provides warmth, love and affection to the baby. It has many benefits like

Benefits the Baby Enjoys

- It provides complete nutrition to the infant up to 6 months, almost half of nutrition for next 6 months and up to one-third for next one year.

- Breast milk is easily digested.
- Breast milk contains the right amount of calories, nutrients, minerals, enzymes and water, which is optimum for baby.
- It is easily available at right time and at right temperature.
- Helps the baby to avoid early food allergies.
- It is more hygienic.
- Breastfed babies have better cognitive development and visual development.
- Improves bonding between the mother and the child and provides warmth, love and affection.
- Breastfeed babies have higher intelligent Quotient (IQ), language development and mathematical abilities.
- Breastfeeding prevents obesity.
- Breast milk boosts the baby's immunity and forms a protective infection fighting environment for her digestive system.
- Breast feed babies are less likely to suffer from ailments like pneumonia, diarrhea, otitis media, hypertension, heart disease etc [2].

Benefits for the Mother

- Reduces post delivery bleeding and anemia.
- Helps mother regain her normal figure.

- Strengthens early maternal – infant bond.
- Supports involution of the uterus.
- Breastfeeding lengthens ovulation.
- Long term effects of breastfeeding include reduced risk of breast, ovarian, endometrial cancers and osteoporosis.
- Early initiation of breastfeeding and frequent feeding saves mother from problems like breast engorgement [2].

Benefits to Family and Society

- It reduces infant mortality.
- It reduces financial strain on family as it saves the cost of medicines, hospitalization, bottles, milk, fuel, water etc.
- It is eco-friendly [2].

How Breastfeeding Should Begin

Start breastfeeding within one hour of birth. This early contact in first hour is so important for bonding. It helps mother to love and care for her baby. Let the mother breastfeed whenever the baby seems to want to (demand feeding) and for as long as he wants.

Educates Mother To:

- Feed their baby on one breast at one time to make it sure that baby is getting both foremilk and hindmilk.
- Start feeding from the right at one feed and from the left at the next feed, this gives stimulation to both breasts for milk production.
- If baby refuses to take breast from another side, hold the baby in different position.
- Avoid prelacteal feeds (glucose water, Honey, sugar etc), as it stops baby to feel hungry or thirsty and decreases breast milk production as baby does not suck enough.
- A baby does not need extra water, even in hot weather.
- The baby should breastfeed at night for as long as possible.
- A baby should regain his birth weight in 10 days [3].

Production of Milk

Every time baby suckles at the breast, nerve endings in the nipple gets stimulated and sends message to anterior pituitary, which makes Prolactin. Prolactin makes the gland cells in the breast to secrete milk. Prolactin works after the baby suckles, and makes milk for next feed. These events, from stimulation of the nipple to secretion of milk are called milk secreting reflex or Prolactin reflex.

Oxytocin secreted by posterior pituitary, is produced when the baby suckles and stimulates the sensory nerves in the nipple and makes milk flow for present feed. This event is called as ejection reflex or Oxytocin reflex.

Educate mother:

- More suckling makes more milk
- Baby suckling in good position increases milk production
- If mother is worried, it suppresses milk.
- If she is in pain, it hinders milk ejection.
- If she is embarrassed, it hinders milk ejection [3,4].

Foods that Enhance Breast Milk Production

1. **Salmon:** It is a good source of EFA (Essential Fatty acids) and Omega 3. Both of them are highly nutritious and essential for lactating mothers as they boost lactation hormones and make milk more nutritious.
2. **Spinach and beet leaves:** It contains iron, calcium and folic acid, which are good for milk production.
3. **Fennel seeds:** Fennel seeds boost breast milk.
4. **Carrot:** Carrots have lactation promoting qualities. It contains Vitamin A which complements lactation and boosts the quality of milk.
5. **Bottle gourd:** It keeps a nursing mother hydrated and increases milk quantity.
6. **Fenugreek:** These seeds are known for boosting breast milk supply.
7. **Garlic:** Garlic is considered the best food to increase breast milk, as it is known for boosting lactation in nursing mothers.
8. **Barley:** Barley boosts lactation, and also keeps mother hydrated.
9. **Almonds:** Almonds are rich in Omega-3, which helps lactation boosting hormones to help produce more milk.
10. **Water and juices:** Drinking water and juices is supposed to boost lactation.
11. **Poppy seeds (khushkus):** Poppy seeds have sedative properties that help lactating mothers to relax and calm down, which enhances milk production.
12. **Black sesame seeds:** These seeds are a rich source of calcium and believed to increase milk supply.
13. **Cumin seeds:** These seeds boost milk supply.
14. **Brown rice:** According to the research paper "Increase Breast Milk Supply with Herbal Galactagogues" published in the World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences, brown rice enhances breast milk production [5].

Tips to Increase Breast Milk Supply

Sometimes, mothers assume that the milk supply is low, following are some tips which help to increase breast milk supply.

1. **Nurse frequently and efficiently:** Milk production is a demand and supply process. The more the baby drinks, the higher is the production. More suckling makes more milk
2. **Express milk:** If the baby is unable to empty one breast, express the milk after nursing to maintain the milk supply.
3. **Nursing vacation:** Spend time just nursing the baby for two to three days and do nothing else. Of course, you have to feed yourself and be relaxed.
4. **Switch sides:** Make baby drink from both the breasts. Switch sides twice or thrice every time you feed. But let the baby finish one breast and then switch to the other. This technique gives fatty 'hind milk' to the baby.
5. **Avoid pacifiers and nipple shields:** Avoid using pacifiers and nipple shields.
6. **Avoid solids:** If the baby is younger than six months, avoid feeding her solids, water and formula.
7. **Rest well:** Besides eating well, rest well. Consume well-balanced diet and more liquids.
8. **Check medication:** If mother is taking medicines, find out from doctor if they are interfering with milk production. Avoid using hormonal contraceptives after delivery.
9. **Stay calm and relaxed:** Stress does play a major role in reducing the milk production. The key is to stay relaxed by practicing healthy, stress reduction techniques like breathing exercises that would help ensure a good supply of milk.
10. **Use the right bra:** Wearing a tight bra that compresses your chest region or one that is rigid around the breast can affect milk flow. The wrong bra can lead to clogged ducts, blocking milk production.
11. **Breast massage:** Massaging the breasts will help open blocked ducts, loosening hardened areas or lumps. It does not increase milk production but allows easy flow of milk. It may even lessen the risk of mastitis [6].

Baby is Not Getting Enough Milk

If the baby is not getting enough milk, it may be due to following reasons.

1. **Mother does not breastfeed the baby often:** Restricting the number of breastfeeds in any way, for

example feeding only at certain times (scheduled feeds) also limits the supply of milk.

2. **The baby does not want to suckle for long enough:** If baby does not suckle enough, the supply of milk decreases.
3. **Mother restricts the length of breastfeed:** If a mother feeds her baby for only 5-10 mins and the baby is a slow feeder. He doesn't get the hind milk and seems to be hungry.
4. **Mother started supplements too early:** Some mothers start supplement feeds too early like juice, honey, Glucose, etc. This supplement feed fills the baby's stomach and he suckles less on breast which decreases breast milk.
5. **Baby suckles in poor position:** If baby suckles in poor position he doesn't remove the breast milk effectively and supply decreases.
6. **Mother has poor ejection reflex:** If mother is anxious, in pain, lonely, embarrassed etc her feelings hinder ejection reflex, so milk flow is altered.
7. **Mother lacks confidence:** A mother who lacks confidence can doubt her milk away.
8. **Mother is not enthusiastic about breastfeeding:** Sometimes mother does not want to breastfeed her baby. She wants to leave her baby with someone else like relatives, friends so start artificial feed, which decreases breast feed.
9. **Mother is undernourished:** Mothers undernourished may produce less breast milk [7].

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