

Current Breastfeeding Practice In Mumbai

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Summary

One hundred mothers who attended the under-5 clinic at the King Edward Memorial hospital, Parel, Mumbai were interviewed to find out the current breastfeeding practice. These mothers had delivered within the last one year. This study shows, 64% of the babies were exclusively breastfed, 17% were near-totally breastfed and the rest were partially breastfed at the time of interview. Seventy nine percent of the mothers had initiated breastfeeding within 2 hours after delivery irrespective of the mode of delivery. Seventyfive percent of the women breastfed their babies on demand and 94% gave the baby nightfeeds of breastmilk. All women allowed the baby to suckle as long as he wants. The study also showed that 69% of the mothers believed that the baby should be breastfed for 1-2 years.

Introduction

Mother nature has bestowed a spontaneous instinct in mammals to breastfeed their little ones immediately after their birth. This is also true for the human species.

In developing countries where breastfeeding is taken for granted as the natural way to feed infants in normal circumstances, nearly all infants are breastfed by their

mothers. But with increasing industrialisation, many problems are encountered. An important one is that of premature weaning, when the mother begins to breastfeed but stops quite soon. Another problem is that of partial breastfeeding even when the baby requires exclusive breastfeeding. The mother may be away from her baby, at work, and obliged to arrange for supplementary feeds.

In India, with increasing industrialisation, urbanisation, and the influence of the western culture, the desire to breastfeed is getting reduced, mothers are getting demotivated and thus, breastfeeding is endangered. Some of the practical impediments to adequate breastfeeding are anxiety about ability to breastfeed especially in first-time mothers, increasing incidence of caesarean section with delay in the establishment of lactation, greater prevalence of the nuclear family system with lack of guidance from family elders and mothers working outside home.

India has an ancient tradition of encouragement to breastfeeding. In order to achieve the objective of 'Baby friendly care', the guidelines suggested by the WHO and UNICEF are useful. Some of the important ones are.....

- Initiation of breastfeeding within half an hour of birth, for the baby to avail of the benefits of colostrum.
- Breastfeeding on demand and giving the baby nightfeeds of breastmilk.
- Exclusive breastfeeding till 3-6 months of age, then supplementation.
- Total duration of breastfeeding recommended is at least 2 years and more if possible and desirable for the mother.
- And the most important in our country, emphasis on adequate maternal nutrition during lactation.

With these goals in mind, training programs for doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals are being conducted since the last 2 decades under the guidance of

the WHO and UNICEF. These have been intensified after 1990. The training includes imparting knowledge and information about recent developments in the science of lactation management. Counselling regarding breastfeeding is also carried out in antenatal and postnatal outpatient departments and wards. In addition, mass communication media are being used for the education of the people at large.

Material and methods

In this single investigator study, 100 mothers of infants attending the under-5 outpatient department at the King Edward Memorial Hospital were interviewed. Eighty-six percent of the babies were less than 6 months of age.

are cared for better and are more likely to be brought to the under-5 outpatient department regularly.

All the babies were breastfed by their mothers. No prelacteal feeds were given to the babies in the hospital and nothing was given to them in between two feeds of breastmilk.

When the mothers were asked about how soon after delivery was breastfeeding started their answers were related with the mode of delivery.

Of the 100 mothers, 83 had full term normal deliveries, 12 underwent lower-segment caesarean sections, 5 had their babies delivered by forceps and 2 had preterm

Table I
Initiation of Lactation and Mode of Delivery

mode of delivery	0.5-2 hours	3-6 hours	8-12 hours	1-6 days	total
full-term normal delivery	69	8	3	3	83
lower-segment caesarean section	6	5	-	1	12
forceps delivery	3	-	-	-	3
preterm normal delivery	1	1	-	-	2
total	79	14	3	4	100

42% of the women were first-time mothers.

The mothers were asked the following questions.....

- how soon after delivery was breastfeeding initiated
- about their current breastfeeding practice- do they breastfeed the baby on demand, give the baby nightfeeds of breastmilk and let the baby suckle for as long as he wants
- about the duration for which they would breastfeed
- about their diet while breastfeeding

Observation And Discussion

Almost all the interviewed women were from the lower socio-economic status. Most were housewives. It was interesting to note that the sample included 64 male and 36 female infants, which probably means that male infants

normal deliveries. Table (I). Seventy-nine percent of the babies had started breastfeeding within 2 hours following delivery, irrespective of the mode of delivery. 83.13% of the women who had full-term normal deliveries and 50% of those who were delivered by lower segment caesarean section had initiated lactation within 2 hours following the birth of their babies.

The benefits of initiation of lactation immediately after delivery of the baby are known. But it seems that this practice could not be followed in all the parturients for various reasons. In 11 of the 12 cases where the baby was delivered by lower-segment caesarean section, breastfeeding was initiated within 6 hours of the delivery. In the remaining 1 case, the baby was in the NICU after birth and hence, could not be breast fed immediately. To ensure that breastfeeding is initiated as soon as possible

Table II
Duration of Exclusive Breastfeeding

Duration	Number of cases
1-3 months	13
4-6 months	54
8-10 months	6
1-2 years	10
don't know	17
Total	100

after delivery, it is essential that the healthcare givers are convinced about the urgency of handing the baby to the mother immediately after delivery and then helping the mother with the correct position and technique of breastfeeding.

On questioning the mother about how long the baby would be exclusively breastfed, the answers were as follows...

Fiftyfour percent of the mothers wanted to exclusively breastfeed their babies till the age of 4-6 months, 10% of the mothers believed that the baby should be exclusively

Table III
Duration of Breastfeeding

Duration	Number of cases
3 months	1
4-6 months	2
1-2 years	69
3 years or more	13
don't know	15
total	100

breastfed for 1-2 years and 17% didn't know how long the baby should be exclusively breastfed. Table II. These mothers require more counselling about lactation management.

The mothers were then asked about the total period for which they would breastfeed. They replied as follows:

Sixtynine percent of the mothers believed that the baby should be breastfed for 1-2 years. Out of these 69 mothers, 20 wanted to breastfeed for 1 year, 9 for 1.5 years and 40 for 2 years. Three percent of the mothers believed that the baby should be breastfed only for 3-6 months Table III. This finding suggests that it is important to put more emphasis on the need to breastfeed during the second year of life of the baby.

On questioning the mothers about the diet of the baby at the time of interview, the answers obtained were as follows.....

Of the 100 babies, 64 were exclusively breastfed, 17 were near-totally breastfed and 19 were partially breastfed at the time of the interview. Table IV. The near-totally breastfed infants received cow's milk, water, gripe water, "janam ghuti" and "bal kadu". The diet of the partially breastfed babies was supplemented by rice, pulses, potato, vegetables, banana and biscuits.

74.41% of the babies below the age of 6 months and 77.02% of babies below the age of 3 months were exclusively breastfed.

Table IV
Current Diet of the Babies

Age of the babies	Exclusively breastfed	near-totally breastfed	partially breastfed	total
1-3 months	57	16	1	74
4-6 months	7	-	5	12
6-9 months	-	1	10	11
10-12 months	-	-	3	3
total	64	17	19	100

It could also be inferred from the study that educated mothers, that is those who had studied up to the 7th standard and beyond, were better aware regarding the duration of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding. Seventy five percent of the mothers breastfed their babies on demand and 94% gave the babies nightfeeds of breastmilk. All the mothers allowed the baby to suckle for as long as he wants. Twentynine percent of the mothers said that they would like to eat a balanced diet, take "tonic" and eat green leafy vegetables, eggs and more nutritious food while lactating. About 1/3 of the women interviewed had some misconceptions about the diet of a lactating mother. Most of them did not want to include "cold things" in their diet like curds, guava and banana. Seventeen percent did not feel that they should include anything extra in their routine diet during lactation. Also educated mothers were older at the time of birth of their first baby and were less likely to have misconceptions about their diet during the lactational period.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the study that most of the mothers were following modern concepts of lactation management

which may be the outcome of training given to medical and paramedical personnel at the King Edward Memorial Hospital. All the interviewed mothers breastfed their babies. Correct breastfeeding practices are being generally followed as regards feeding the baby on demand, allowing him to suckle as long as he wants and giving him nightfeeds of breastmilk.

However, few misconceptions exist in the minds of the mothers regarding the duration of breastfeeding and the diet of a lactating mother. These misbeliefs seem to be traditionally based. To remove them it is required to specifically instruct mothers-to-be and elderly women in the family at antenatal counselling sessions and through mass communication media.

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