

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the safest, cheapest and best protective food for infants. It is perfect food for infants and provides total nutrient requirements for the first six months of life.

When combined with appropriate weaning foods, it is an invaluable source of nourishment until past the second birth day. It prevents malnutrition and allows the child to develop fully.

The advantages of breastfeeding are as follows:

Nutritive Value

- Breast milk contains all the nutrients in the right proportion which are needed for optimum growth and development of the baby up to 6 months. It is essential for brain growth of the infant because it has high percentage of lactose and galactose which are important components of glucocerebroside.
- It facilitates absorption of calcium which helps in bony growth. It contains amino acids like taurine and cysteine which are important as neurotransmitters.
- Breast milk fats are polyunsaturated fatty acids which are necessary for the myelination of the nervous system. It has vitamins, minerals, electrolytes and water in the right proportion for the infant which are necessary for the
- maturation of the intestinal tract. It provides 66 calories per 100 mL and contains 1.2 g protein, 3.8 g fat, 7 g lactose and vitamin A 170 to 670 IU, vitamin C 2 to 6 mg, vitamin D 2.2 IU, calcium 35 mg, phosphorus 15 mg in 100 mL. The total amount of milk secretion per day is about 600 to 700 mL, which is sufficient for the baby. Its composition is ideal for an infant. It provides specific nutrition for preterm baby in preterm delivery.

Digestibility

- Breast milk is easily digestible.
- The proteins of breast milk are mostly lactoalbumin and lactoglobulin which form soft curds that is easy to digest.
- The enzyme lipase in the breast milk helps in the digestion of fats and provides free fatty acids.

Protective Value

- Breast milk contains IgA, IgM, macrophages, lymphocytes, unsaturated lactoferrin, lysozyme, complement. Thus, breastfed baby is less likely to develop infections especially gastrointestinal and respiratory tract infections, e.g. diarrhea and ARI.
- It also provides protection against malaria and various viral and bacterial infections like skin infections, septicemia, etc.
- Breastfeeding protects the infant from allergy and bronchial asthma.
- It also protects against neonatal hypocalcemia, tetany, necrotizing enterocolitis, deficiencies of vitamin E and zinc, neonatal convulsions and sudden infant death syndrome.
- Exclusive breastfeeding baby has less chance of developing malnutrition, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, coronary artery disease, arteriosclerosis, ulcerative colitis, appendicitis, childhood lymphoma, liver disease; celiac disease and dental caries.

Psychological Benefits

- . Breastfeeding promotes close physical and emotional bondage with the mother by frequent skin-to-skin contact, attention and interaction.
- It stimulates psychomotor and social development.
- It leads to better parent child adjustment, fewer behavioral disorders in children and less risk of child abuse and neglect.
- Breastfeeding promotes development of higher intelligence and feeling of security in infant.

Maternal Benefits

- Breastfeeding reduces the chance of postpartum hemorrhage and helps in better uterine involution.
- Lactational amenorrhea promotes in recovery of iron stores.
- It can protect from pregnancy for first 6 months if exclusive breastfeeding is carried out.

- Breastfeeding improves metabolic efficiency and satisfaction with sense of fulfilment of the mother.
- It reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer of the mother. It improves slimming of the mother by consuming extra fat which accumulated during pregnancy.
- It is more convenient and time saving for the mother.
- Mother can provide fresh, pure, readymade, clean uncontaminated milk to her baby at right temperature without any preparations. Mother feels comfortable to feed the baby especially at night.

Family and Community Benefits

- Breastfeeding is economical in terms of saving of money, time and energy. Family has to spend less on milk, health care and illness.
- Community expenditure on health care and contraception are reduced. It is economic for the families, hospitals, communities and for countries.

Composition of breastfeeding

Colostrum : it is secreted during first 3 days after delivery. It is thick, yellow and small in quantities. It contain more antibodies with higher amount of proteins and fat soluble vitamin (A, D, E, K)

It is protective for the baby

Transitional milk :

It follows the colostrum and secretes during first 2 week of postnatal period. It has increase fat and sugar content and decrease protein and immunoglobulin

Mature milk :

It is secreted usually from 10 to 12 days after delivery . it is watery but contain all nutrients

Preterm milk :

The breast milk secreted by the mother who has delivery a preterm baby is different who has delivery full term baby .

This milk contain more proteins, sodium, iron, immunoglobulin, and calories

Foremilk :

It is secreted at the starting of the regular breast feeding . it is more watery to satisfy the baby thirst and contain more proteins, sugar, vitamins and minerals

Hindmilk :

It is secreted towards the end of regular breastfeeding and contain more fat and energy .
The mother should feed the baby allowing one breast to empty to provide both foremilk and hindmilk, before offering other breast .