

Question & **A**nswers sheet on

Breastfeeding and Family Foods: Loving & Healthy

Following Q & A on this topic would help each and everyone to know accurately about exclusive breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding:



Q. How severe is the problem of malnutrition in India and how it affects the child?

Ans. Malnutrition is responsible, directly or indirectly for 60% of 2.42 million under 5 child deaths in India every year. According to the NFHS-2 of India, 47 percent of the children under the age of 3, about 36 million are underweight. Malnutrition makes the child prone to recurrent infections, deficient mental abilities, less physical vigor and high mortality rate. 75% of children below 5 years are suffering from iron deficiency anemia. Other diseases are vitamin A, zinc and iodine deficiency.

Q. Why breastfeeding should be started early?

Ans. Because

1. Baby is most active in first 30 to 60 minutes.
2. Sucking reflex is most active at that time.
3. Early start ensures success of exclusive breastfeeding. Colostrum, which is the first yellowish secretions from the breast, is full of substances that protect the baby from getting any infection and acts to prevent infection like a vaccine.
4. It prevents breast swelling and pain, reduces post delivery bleeding.

Q. What are the disadvantages of starting family foods early or too late?

Ans. Disadvantages of Introducing family foods before 6 Months are, foods may be difficult to eat and digest. Babies will take less breastmilk, so that highly nutritious breastmilk is replaced by less nutritious solids. The risk and severity of diarrhea and other infections is increased. The risk of allergies and asthma

is increased. The contraceptive effect of breastfeeding is interfered. There is increased risk of transmission of HIV from HIV+ mother if family foods are introduced early.

Disadvantages of introducing family foods too late are, child does not receive the required nutrients. The growth and development of the child slows down. The risk of various deficiencies and malnutrition increases.

Q. What is Optimal infant feeding practice?

Ans. According to WHO and UNICEF optimal infant practice is:

- Starting breastfeeding immediately after birth, preferably within one hour.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months
- Continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond
- Introducing appropriate and adequate complementary feeding after 6 months.

Q. Why breastmilk continues to be an ideal food for infant and young children over 6 months of age?

Ans. Breastmilk is a high quality, nutrient-rich and energy-rich food, which is easy to digest. Breastmilk contains factors that help in the absorption of nutrients. The anti-infective factors in breastmilk provide protection against illnesses and reduce the severity of those that occur. This protection continues to be helpful even after 6 months. Sick babies often do not feel like eating foods, but their appetite for breastmilk is still there.

Breastfeeding provides emotional nurturing for mothers and babies that is valuable and enjoyable well beyond 6 months.

Q. Why commercial baby foods should not be given?

Ans. Tinned complementary foods are convenient, but these are usually 6 to 10 times more expensive than family foods. They do not have variety of taste and textures similar to home-prepared foods and also interfere in the development of taste of home made food. Most of these products are milk based and so are not the ideal foods. Young children need fresh foods free of preservatives, which other members of the family are eating and they feel satisfied.

Q. Which foods should be avoided?

Ans. Fried snacks, such as crisps and puffs, are of poor nutritional value and much too salty for young children. Sugary foods, sweets, fizzy drinks and colas provide energy but no nutrients and they fill child's stomach and lower his appetite for more nutritious foods. They can also lead to tooth decay. Juices and tea lower his appetite. Honey sometimes contains bacteria, which leads to infant botulism.

Q. How the family foods can be made energy and nutrient rich?

Ans. The porridge can be made thicker by mashing beans, vegetables, the staple, or meat in the soup into a thick puree and fed to the child. By replacing some of the cooking water with fresh or soured milk, coconut milk, or cream. A spoonful of milk powder can be added after cooking. By stirring in a paste made from nuts or seeds such as groundnut (peanut butter) or sesame seeds.

Ghee or oil can be used for frying foods, or it can be spread, as it makes the food softer and easier to eat and

provides extra energy. Sugar and jaggery are energy rich and can be added to foods in small quantities to increase the energy concentration but they don't have any other nutrients.

Q. When should babies be given complementary foods and why?

Ans. Complementary foods should be started after 6 months of age. By this time they are developmentally mature enough to start eating semi-liquid and semi-solid foods. And it is only after 6 months that they need nutrition in addition to breastmilk.

Q. What should be the type of complementary foods?

Ans. Foods given to the baby should not be thin and watery but should be like a gruel/kheer of higher nutritional value. Food prepared at home is the best and ideally suited to the baby's needs. Cereals with added oil, pulses, lentils, cereals with added milk and mashed vegetables for the vegetarians and meat, eggs and fish for the non-vegetarians make good combination of foods.

Q. Why we should encourage self-eating by children?

Ans. Giving family food helps adapting to family practices. Babies should be allowed to make attempt to feed themselves near the end of the first year, but they will still need help and encouragement in eating through the 2nd year. Babies are allowed to eat themselves to help develop coordination and parents should interact with them to tell new concepts and words while feeding, as this helps in the better mental development of the child.

Breastfeeding is the right of mother and babies. Support it!

What is BPNI

BPNI is a registered, non-profit, independent, national, organization with international collaboration and works towards protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants and young children since 1991. BPNI works to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in India with the broad goal of empowering all women to breastfeed their infants exclusively for first 6 months of life and to continue breastfeeding for two years or beyond along with adequate and appropriate complementary feeding through advocacy, training, education, information, research and social mobilization. BPNI also works in close liaison with International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) and World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA).

BPNI Policy on Funds

BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies producing infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles, related equipments, or infant food (*cereal foods*).



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