

BREASTFEEDING:

Education For Life

All over the world there is increasing knowledge and concern about early child development and "significant interactions" in the family. There is widespread interest in improving the quality of child care and in integrating knowledge about the needs of the developing child into our education systems and curriculum. However, the significance of breastfeeding for human development and for the quality of life of families is rarely considered. The exciting "news" from ongoing research is that breastfeeding is not only important for health, nutrition and the development of a baby's trust and sense of security, but enhances brain development and learning readiness as well. For example:



- * From birth, one of the greatest needs of all children is to be talked to, touched, cuddled, hugged, to see familiar faces and expressions and to hear familiar voices, and to see that others will respond to them. Children also need new and interesting things to look at, listen to, watch, hold and play with. This is the beginning of learning. Breastfeeding provides all opportunities to the newborn baby.
- * Special fatty acids in breastmilk lead to increased intelligence quotients (IQs) and better visual acuity (Andraca I and Uauy R)
- * Breastfed babies have fewer ear infections, which have been associated with hearing loss and learning delays.
- * Several studies have shown better school achievement in breastfed children, even at the end of secondary school and when controlling for social class, mother's education and race.



Therefore, this year's World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) theme addresses the need to integrate information on the importance of breastfeeding into our educational systems at all levels. It should be reinforced that infants should be fed exclusively on breastmilk from birth to six months of age. Thereafter, children should continue to be breastfed, while receiving appropriate complementary foods, for up to two years of age or beyond.



HUMAN RIGHTS
HEALTH
THEATRE
ART & MUSIC
NUTRITION
ARCHITECTURE
PEDIATRICS
GEOGRAPHY
ECOLOGY
WOMEN'S STUDY
LEGAL STUDY
AGRICULTURE
COMMUNICATION
MEDICINE
HOME SCIENCE
MATHEMATICS
BIOLOGY
CHEMISTRY
PHYSICS

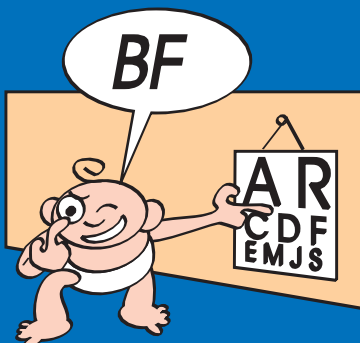
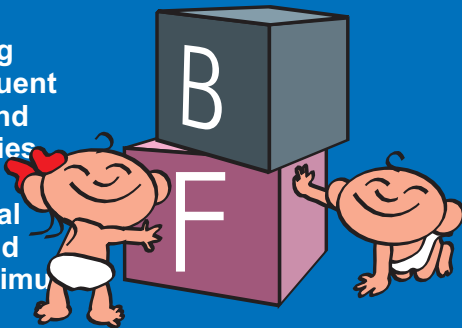
Breastfeeding gives a headstart in education

Breastfeeding enhances optimal brain development provided by nutrients and interaction



Breastfeeding protects babies from illnesses that can cause malnutrition, learning and hearing difficulties

Breastfeeding ensures frequent interaction and exposes babies to language, positive social behaviour and significant stimuli



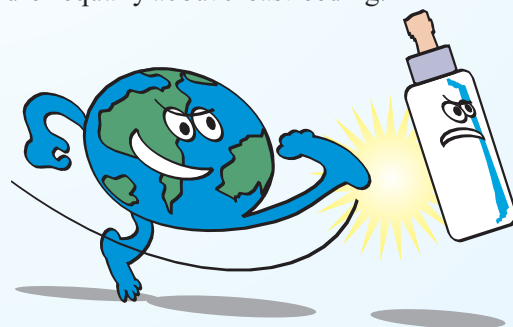
Breastfeeding enables better visual development and visual acuity leading to reading and learning readiness

The goals of World Breastfeeding Week 1999 on the theme of "Breastfeeding : Education for Life" are to :

- ❖ Increase public awareness of the importance of protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as the standard for infant development and growth.
- ❖ Encourage the incorporation of education on breastfeeding and appropriate infant feeding practices into all levels of formal and informal education.
- ❖ Improve relevant curriculum design with all types of educators and trainers from professional institutions, medical and other teaching schools, health organisations, public and private schools, hospitals and community education centres.
- ❖ Involve school children, from pre-school onward, and teenagers in WBW 1999 activities and provide tools for popular education appropriate for different age groups.
- ❖ Encourage the integration of breastfeeding experiences and practices into children's developmental materials and toys.

Why is it important to provide breastfeeding education ?

Formal and informal education gives children, youth and adults numerous opportunities to obtain correct information about breastfeeding. Breastfeeding information can be easily incorporated into subjects such as science, biology, family studies, nutrition, and home economics. Creative educators can also incorporate breastfeeding issues into math, art, social studies, history, marketing, business, ecology and even engineering. Since male and female attitudes affect societal norms, it is necessary to educate all children equally about breastfeeding.



Developing critical thinking skills and applying them to breastfeeding issues help children, youth and adults to examine the advantages and disadvantages of various feeding practices, form their own opinions and make informed choices. Learners become aware of pressures from advertisers who promote bottle-feeding, of how careers and breastfeeding can go together and the kind of support breastfeeding women need from society and employers. They will be better able to make informed decisions in their own lives.

The Research Reveals

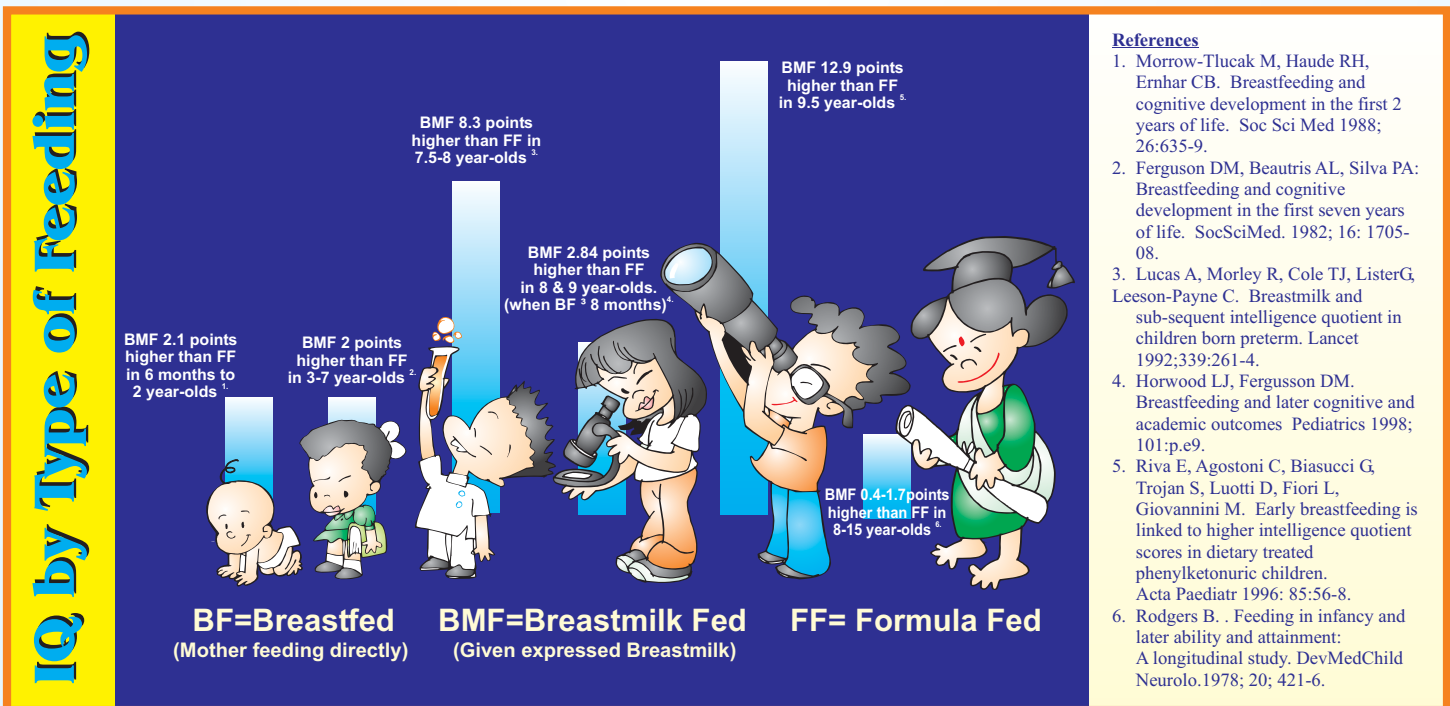
Mainnourished pre-school children from slum areas	The priorities for children : Food, health care and play Resources made available to children			Results (After two years)
	Medical care	Adequate food	Stimulating environment	
Group I				No change in growth or intellect
Group II				Growth as elite Little change in intellect
Group III				Growth and Intellect as elite
'Elite' Control group				Full growth and intellectual development

-From Book "My Name is Today"

- ▣ A longitudinal study was conducted in New Zealand on "Breastfeeding and Later Cognitive development and Academic outcomes". (2)The results demonstrated increased duration of breastfeeding was associated with statistically significant increases in IQ assessed at the ages of 8 and 9, and higher levels attained in school leaving exams :
- ▣ A prospective Spanish study on "Influence of Breastfeeding on the infant's intellectual development" conducted on 229 infants from birth to 2 years where the bottle fed group (99 infants) had lower results for mental development and for motor development.(2)
- ▣ A Dutch retrospective study on "Neurological difference between 9 year-old children fed breastmilk or formula as babies" conducted on 135 breastfed and 391 formula fed infants revealed that children fed with artificial milks exclusively or supplemented to

breastmilk within the first three weeks of life were found to have twice the rate of minor neurological dysfunction as compared to children fully breastfed at least for the first 21 days of life. The author of the study suggests that the presence and severity of minor neurological dysfunction be related to behavioral and cognitive development at school age.(2)

- ▣ A British study on "Breastmilk and subsequent intelligence quotient in children born premature" shows that the children who had received their mother's milk had a significant higher IQ at ages 7.5 to 8 years than children who did not receive breastmilk. The study concluded that breastmilk itself conferred substantial advantages for cognitive development and that this could perhaps be explained by the presence of various factors in breastmilk necessary for the development of neural tissues such as long chain fatty acids.(2)



Health and learning

"There is a strong link between children's health and school performance," says Professor Dr.Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din, Egypt's Minister of Education, a paediatrician. "This link ... is a major challenge to educational planners and policy makers."

Learning for Life

A comprehensive approach to learning for life includes helping children develop the literacy, numeracy and psychosocial skills and the knowledge base that will equip them to be active and effective participants in the events of their lives.

In this approach to learning, teachers and students need to relate in new ways, so that the classroom experience - the very process of learning - becomes a preparation for life. As the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child make clear, teaching must be a process of guiding and facilitating, in which children are encouraged to think for themselves and to discover how to learn.

The classroom must be an environment of democratic participation.

Education as a life long process is an imperative part of

our lives. Learning begins right from the birth of the child (or even in the womb) and continues through the life. A baby's five senses - sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch - are all working from the moment of birth. And from the moment of birth, a baby begins learning about the world. There are two forms of education (1) Formal and (2) Non-formal or informal and learning is the outcome of the education. Our human brain is programmed in such a way that it comes with certain capacities of existing knowledge and ready to accept new knowledge and skills. Soon after the child is born he/she knows how to suck milk from his mother's breast - the very first learning process nature has fed in the human brain. This capacity of learning further gets enhanced with the breastmilk- since this is the only most complete nutritive food required for the proper growth of each part of the child's body.(3)

Education revolution five key elements

- * Learning for life
- * Accessibility, quality and flexibility
- * Gender sensitivity and girls' education
- * The state as key partner
- * Care for the young child

Are you living in a breastfeeding - friendly culture ?

Check

and look around whether such misleading messages are promoted in your mass media or educational institutions.

- * Are health professionals taught that there are few if any significant differences between human milk and infant formula?
- * Do textbooks or children's books show mothers, fathers, or nurses giving bottles as if this is the normal way to feed babies?
- * Are bottles or pacifiers used as symbols for babies, for example in birth congratulation greeting cards or public rooms for changing and feeding babies?
- * Are mothers asked not to breastfeed in public?
- * Are parents encouraged to put their babies to sleep alone from an early age?
- * Do baby dolls come with bottles? Are there other toys that promote bottle feeding as the cultural norm?
- * Are early separation and "independence" of the baby promoted as positive values and bottles and pacifiers as ways to make separation easier?
- * Are feeding bottles used as symbols of love and care for newborns in the electronic and print media.

If you answered 'yes' to most of the above questions, you are living in a breastfeeding- ignorant culture.

The Breastmilk Enhances

- ▣ The breastmilk enhances the capacities and capabilities of a child for the whole of his life.
- ▣ It contains the most suitable proteins and fats for a baby in the right quantities for proper growth.
- ▣ It contains more lactose (milk sugar) than any other milk and this is essential for a human baby.
- ▣ In India thousands of children become blind every year, due to lack of vitamin-A, causing a blinding malnutrition, while breastfeeding can help to prevent it.
- ▣ Iron in breast milk is better absorbed than the iron in cow's milk, it is important for baby's brain development.
- ▣ All put together breastmilk reduces the risk of sickness, infections and repeated infections making a child healthier with proper overall growth.
- ▣ It contains water soluble vitamin D, besides the fat soluble fraction which protects against rickets. It also contains more vitamin A, C and E than cow's milk. The breastfed baby does not require any vitamin supplements and she does not need fruit juice.
- ▣ Artificially fed children are more prone to infections than breastfed ones. Repeated infections lead to malnutrition and malnourished small children are often sick and refuse to eat endangering further malnutrition. It dulls motivation & curiosity to learn. Malnutrition affects learning capabilities which bears its results through out life.

Ideas

for Action

TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- ▶ Contact your local school board and those in charge of curriculum development. Suggest breastfeeding be included in the curriculum for subjects such as Human Development, Family Life Studies, Sociology, Psychology, History, Women's Studies, Home Economics, Health Education, Science and Biology.
- ▶ Campaign for breastfeeding education to be part of recertifying requirements for teachers of all of the above subjects.
- ▶ Develop a Breastfeeding-Friendly Nursery School Initiative.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

- ▶ Review books in the library for positive breastfeeding images and practices. Replace unsupportive books with better options.
- ▶ Have the children ask parents and neighbours when and how their babies first started to eat other foods. Discuss the answers in class and investigate why there are differences in the ages and foods that mothers introduce.
- ▶ Place posters, brochures and other information about breastfeeding in school-based health centres and family education centres.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- ▶ Establish a school policy that supports teachers and staff who are breastfeeding while working.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Have students monitor TV presentations on breastmilk substitute use and breastfeeding. Discuss them in their classes, such as Marketing, English Literature, Sociology, History and Law.
- ▶ Have students do searches on breastfeeding and formula feeding in the Internet and discuss the sites that they find.
- ▶ Bring a breastfeeding mother to school with her baby and let her talk about her experience.
- ▶ Have students write a term paper or thesis topic on an issue related to breastfeeding.
- ▶ Develop a student apprenticeship or practicum to work with health clinics and schools to inform the community about the importance of breastfeeding and appropriate infant feeding practices.
- ▶ Integrate breastfeeding into all levels of curricula in all professional training Schools : Economics, Marketing,

Ecology, History, Business, Sociology, Anthropology, women's Studies, Psychology, Social Work, Microbiology, Chemistry, Education, Law, Medicine and Art.

- ▶ Encourage students to take up project work on nutritional requirements of infants and young children.
- ▶ Organize debates, poster competition and essay writing competitions on the issue of breastfeeding.
- ▶ Encourage NSS and scouts/guides incharge to take up activities related to promotion of before and control of artificial feeding.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- ▶ Initiate a breastfeeding clinic at the medical, nursing, nutrition and other health professional schools.
- ▶ Sensitise your fellow faculty, department heads, deans and others to the need to review and improve the breastfeeding content of existing curricula and/or teaching materials.
- ▶ Use textbooks with good information on breastfeeding. Demand that textbooks be revised to include state of the art information on breastfeeding and lactation management.
- ▶ Participate in active sharing of experience, lessons learned, models, resources with others in your own professional organisation or through existing networks on the Internet.

How to Use The Media to Promote Breastfeeding



- * Develop a fact sheet for the media on how breastfeeding and breastmilk enhance children's development.
- * Organise a positive letter-writing campaign congratulating or encouraging advertisers and companies that portray breastfeeding positively in their materials.
- * Organise a letter writing campaign to newspapers, TV or movies when breastfeeding is portrayed negatively or bottle feeding is held up as the first choice for feeding infants.
- * Inform the media about companies that support and promote breastfeeding and companies that do not.
- * Write to TV producers, asking them to show babies being breastfed in cartoon shows for children and adults.
- * Approach authors of children's books and ask them to integrate breastfeeding into books and stories for children.
- * Inform the press and BPNI of all violations of the International Code and IMS Act.

Resource Material

Book

The law to protect and promote breastfeeding. A publication of BPNI to explain the provisions of the IMS Act
Rs. 40.00



Book

Breastfeeding & Infant feeding
A Guide for parents - Rs. 10.00



Poster

12" X 18"

(Art paper, four colour, sticker type)
(in English & Hindi) - Rs. 5.00



Video

(Maa ka pyar - Shishu ahar)

Language : Hindi & English

Rs. 250 per cassette



References:

1. Isidora de Andraca and Ricardo Uauy, "Breastfeeding for Optimal Mental Development", Simopoulos AP, Dutra de Oliveira JE, Desai ID (eds): Behavioral and Metabolic Aspects of Breastfeeding. World Rev. Nutr Diet. Basel, Karger, 1995, vol. 78-001-27)
2. Infact/lbfan Winter '98 Newsletter: Breastfeeding and intelligence
3. The State of the World's Children 1999, UNICEF
4. My name is today, David Morley & Hermione Lovel
5. Feeding and care of Infants and young children. Dr. Shanti Ghosh

Useful Addresses

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Geneva Infant Feeding Association (GIFA)

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WABA & BPNI

WABA is a global and BPNI is a national network of organisations and individuals who believe breastfeeding is the right of all children and mothers and who devote themselves to protect, promote and support that right. WABA and BPNI act to help implement the Innocenti Declaration and works in close liaison with UNICEF.

Sponsorship

We do not accept sponsorship of any kind from companies producing infant milk substitutes, infant foods or related equipment. BPNI encourages all participants of the World Breastfeeding Week to respect and follow this ethical stance.

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www.indiasocial.org/bpni



This childbirth/
breastfeeding doll
is designed by
Lactea and Origen,
Recife, Brazil.



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