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Breast Feeding and Motherhood

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Abstract: Breast feeding is a natural way of feeding new born. Besides being a complete nutrition for a new born, it also provides immunity and enhances emotional bonding between mother and a child. Globally, infant morbidity and mortality ratio have been significantly reduced with the exclusive breast feeding practices for initial 6 months and up to 2 years of age. Every year, during 1st-7th August, International World Breast Feeding Day is celebrated in different countries. The aim of celebrating this day is to create awareness among people about the importance of breast feeding. Being a Muslim, we are privileged that breast feeding to a new born is usually encouraged in our families. Many nursing mothers' wish to breast feed their neonates. However, due to inadequate knowledge about healthy practices during lactation, they encounter problems such as inadequate breast milk production, crack nipples and breast engorgement resulting in decline in breast feeding practices. Milk production in lactating mothers, can be enhanced with an early initiation of breast feeding to a new born, nursing mother intake of healthy diet and rest. With that, spousal and family support during post partum period is also crucial. Moreover, awareness sessions for pregnant, lactating mothers, their spouses and families about the significance of breast feeding to neonates and to families can also help in greater adherence to breast feeding practices. Crack nipple and breast engorgement are two frequent problems faced by nursing mothers which can be reduced by adopting frequent and proper technique of breast feeding practices.

Key words: Breast feeding, nursing mothers, crack nipple, breast engorgement

INTRODUCTION

Breast feeding is a natural way of feeding new born. Besides being a complete nutrition for a new born, it also provides immunity and enhances emotional bonding between mother and a child. Globally, infant morbidity and mortality ratio have been significantly reduced with the exclusive breast feeding practices for initial 6 months and up to 2 years of age. According to Abdullah (2010) "UNICEF recently noted that the reduction of child deaths from 13 million globally in 1990 to 8.8 million in 2008 is partly due to the adoption of basic health interventions such as early and exclusive breast feeding" (p.1). These statistics clearly indicate the health benefits breast feeding offers to a neonate. However, this data also point out the presence of high infant mortality rate throughout the world till today. With that, it identifies breast feeding as a key approach to become baby friendly. Every year during 1st-7th August International World Breast Feeding Day is celebrated in different countries. The aim of celebrating this day is to create awareness among people about the importance of breast feeding.

Being a Muslim, we are privileged that breast feeding to a new born is usually encouraged in our families. There are many verses in Holy Quran which are in congruence that new born should be breast fed up to 2 years of age. Subsequently, teachings of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also emphasize the importance of breast feeding to a new born. Breast feeding is considered as a right of new

born and rewarding act for females in life after death (Shaikh and Ahmed, 2006; Kocturk, 2003). Many nursing mothers' wish to breast feed their neonates. However, due to inadequate knowledge about healthy practices during lactation, they encounter problems such as inadequate breast milk production, crack nipples and breast engorgement resulting in decline in breast feeding practices. This paper will identify ways that can enhance breast milk production in lactating mothers. Furthermore, it will talk about the benefits of breast feeding to neonates, mothers and families. Finally it will identify practices that prevent problem of nipple crack and breast engorgement.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE BREAST MILK PRODUCTION

Breast sucking: Sucking has a direct effect on breast milk production as it stimulates the hormone oxytocin resulting in increase milk production. This is the reason it is being recommended by baby friendly standards that breast feeding should be initiated within half to one hour time after normal delivery. "The frequency and intensity of infant sucking are the principal factors affecting both the endocrine and the autocrine regulation of milk synthesis" (Daly and Hartmann, 1995a; 1995b cited by Dewey, 1998). However, there are certain myths and cultural practices that delay the early breast feeding such as considering colostrum, the first breast feed as unhealthy for newborn, offering newborn honey and water as the first food etc. Scientifically it's proven that

colostrum is highly beneficial for a new born because it posses immunoglobulin which provide lifelong immunity to a new born (Riordan, 2005 cited by Baby Friendly Key Common Messages Working Document, 2007). Offering honey and water to a new born is traditional in some cultures of Muslim families by the respectable or elderly member of the family. With due respect to the tradition and cultural practices, if multiple family members offer honey to a new born, it suppresses baby desire to breast feed as baby stomach capacity at birth is very little. Therefore, as early as breast feeding begins after birth, it enhances milk production and prolong lactation period. Additionally, less feeding problem such as breast engorgement nursing mothers would have to face.

Intake of healthy diet: Another way a lactating mothers can enhance their breast milk production is through intake of healthy and balance diet. During lactation there is a need for increase calcium, protein and calorie intake. Every day during lactation, women lose 300-400 mg of calcium in breast milk that could result in bone turn over. However, this loss is self regulated and restored by the body system (Kovacs, 2005). Nevertheless, intake of high calcium diet would be beneficial. Food sources that are rich in calcium and protein include milk and milk products, spinach, papaya, soya beans etc. Furthermore, a nursing mother should increase her water intake, as 90% of human milk is composed of water. With that, there are certain herbs that are recommended in South Asian culture that also enhances breast milk production. These include fennel seeds (saunf), popcorns, jeera, kalungi (black cumin seeds), sago (sabudana), methi seeds/leave etc.

Rest: Adequate rest is vital to keep human body and mind stay healthy. Lactating mothers require more rest because of the hormonal changes that take place in woman body. Along with oxytocin, prolactin is another hormone responsible for human lactation. Prolactin has a sedating and relaxing effect on women's body (LLL, 2003 cited by Baby Friendly Key Common Messages Working Document, 2007). Therefore, lactating mothers require additional time for rest and sleep.

Spousal and family support: Along with physical health, psychological well being of a nursing mother is also important. During postpartum, mothers require additional support of spouse and family to carry out new role and responsibilities of motherhood. Lack of support could end up nursing mother being stressed out and frustrated. However, physiological changes in breast feeding mothers provide natural protective effects on psychological health of females. Groer (2005) found that breast feeding mothers perceived less stress and have more positive moods and attitude towards stressful life

events as compared to formula feeding and non post partum healthy women. Nevertheless, support and care is an attitude which is always welcomed.

Benefits of breast feeding: Breast feeding is beneficial for newborn, mother and family as a whole. Therefore, it's important to educate pregnant, lactating mothers and their spouses about the significance of breast feeding. Greater the awareness about the health benefits breast feed offers, higher the adherence to feeding practices would result. As discussed earlier that it is an excellent nutrition for a newborn. Moreover, it provides immunity and protects newborn from illness such as diarrhea, ear and respiratory infections, asthma. Moreover, with human milk there are very rare chances for feed allergy and feed intolerance in a new born. Furthermore, literature suggests that breast feeding babies are intellectually stronger than babies who are on formula milk. Moreover, it is convenient for mothers as no special preparation required for it. With that, it protects mothers from diseases such as osteoporosis, breast and ovarian cancer (Health Canada, 2004; Blaauw *et al.*, 1994 cited by Baby Friendly Key Common Messages Working Document, 2007). Besides that, it helps mothers in weight reduction. In addition to individual health benefits, breast feeding is economical for families as a whole because it cut down the cost of purchasing formula milk and reduces health care expenditure directed to child illness.

Common problems during lactation: Beside awareness about the health benefits of breast feed. It is also important to teach nursing mothers about how to deal with the common problem they could face during lactation period? Firstly, crack nipples are the frequent problem. It occurs because of the baby sucking of nipple area of breast only. This problem can be prevented by maintaining proper technique of breast feeding i.e. by placing whole areola of breast in baby's mouth. Moreover, mother application of own milk to the nipple area and then air dry could also help in healing of crack nipples. Breast engorgement is another common problem faced by nursing mothers. This can also be termed as heavy or hard breast, this occur when milk get accumulated in breast. This problem can be serious enough to cause breast abscess, mastitis etc. Breast engorgement can be prevented by timely and frequent breast feeding to neonates. Application of warm towel on the breast and mother taking warm shower could also resolve this concern. Probably, use of breast expresser or breast pumps will likely to overcome this problem especially for working women.

Conclusion: In Conclusion, breast feeding is a natural process of supplementing food and immunity to a newborn. It is considered as a physical, social and

spiritual responsibility of mothers in Muslim families. Inadequate milk production is the common complain of lactating mothers, this can be dealt with early initiation of breast feeding to a new born, nursing mother intake of healthy diet and rest. With that, spousal and family support during post partum period is also crucial. Moreover, awareness sessions for pregnant, lactating mothers, their spouses and families about the significance of breast feeding to neonates and to families can also help in greater adherence to breast feeding practices. Crack nipple and breast engorgement are two frequent problem faced by nursing mothers which can be reduced by adopting frequent and proper technique of breast feeding practices.

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