

Editorial**Mother's Milk - A Best Diet for Infants****Mohsin Masud Jan**

Editor

The best food for the infant is the mother's milk. It is wrong to give it honey which is often contaminated anyway. The first drops of the milk are the most beneficial and helpful in getting the baby's digestive system going. The baby automatically learns to suckle because it is no longer getting its supply of nutrition from the umbilical cord.

Breastfeeding reduces mother's cardiovascular disease risk. Some researchers suggest breastfeeding is responsible for increase in intelligence and problem solving skills. WHO recommended that all babies be exclusively breastfed for 06 months and may be up to 02 years. In Japan, 90% of moms breastfeed until their child is 02 years old. Breastfed babies had high IQ scores than non breastfed. Breastfed babies have fewer infections, healthier than other children.

Many mothers not breastfeed their infants. It is because of the misconception that it is harmful for the health of the mother. In fact, it is because the middle- and upper-class families can afford to buy the alternative milk.

It all starts with early days of pregnancy when the mother needs more nutrient foods for the development of the child and for herself. In its embryonic form the unborn is in a most comfortable state; it rarely tries to change its position and ever so slightly. The moment it is born, it has to cry to take initial deep breaths.

The past week was dedicated worldwide to breastfeeding. According to the various articles appearing in print media, the Punjab and Sindh have very low breastfeeding trends; in other areas, it is mostly because of poverty — i.e. they cannot afford the formula milk (a blessing in disguise). The health benefits of breastfeed to the infants as well as the mothers have also been highlighted. Media, however, are not discussing this important health issue as much as they should.

It may be mentioned here that in some countries women have been demanding and have been provided secluded places to breastfeed their infants. The constraints are only recent. Not in too distant a past mothers would attend to it and no one was bothered.

In some upper class families the infant is given to a governess to breastfeed it. But the mother-child intimacy can never be developed between the infant and a proxy mother.

The buffalo or cow milk as an alternative is too difficult to digest for the infant, even in a diluted form. Even the lighter goat milk is no match for the breastfeed. According to a renowned specialist who is currently working on herd immunity amid Corona threat, South Asian nations have low tolerance for lactose i.e. milk or latte. Thus, the infants have difficulty in digesting milk other than that of their mothers. Their tender, not yet fully developed, digestive system rejects the heavy milk and causes diarrhea. As a result, we have a high infant mortality rate.

Moreover, it has to be administered in a bottle, with a fake nipple secured with a hard plastic lid, which puts an uneasy pressure on the infant's delicate lips.

According to the renowned dentist, it hinders and distorts the teething process. Thus, the teeth get twisted. Also, the growth of the lower jaw, which is the hardest bone in the human body and is the only moveable bone in the human skull, can suffer mutilation. The problem persists into adulthood. No wonder many young adults today have to wear braces.

According to a renowned dentist, the child frequently licks the breast milk spilled on his lips, which helps in the growth of the various muscles in the tongue and around the mouth. He also emphasised that the feeder bottles are infested with germs and microbes.

Perhaps inspired from the children sucking their thumb, a choosni (soother) was invented. It gave the child the feeling that he/ she is getting their supply of the nutrient. This device, with the nipple, had the same negative impact on the growth of milk teeth.

Though, gradually, various supplements have to be added to the child's menu, human milk remains the basic ingredient for growth, strong bones and immunity against epidemics.

Pregnancy is known to be delayed in mothers who breastfeed. There is also a lesser likelihood of breast cancer and other kinds of cancers among these mothers. The breastfed children develop into confident adults.

Though Pakistan is one of the largest farmers of milch cattle dairy, its daily requirement or demand far exceeds the supply. Different international as well as local companies have developed some sort of a 'formula milk' and claim to be the 'ideal' for the infants.

The claim is highly contentious and has been opposed by the civil society. It is also very expensive, especially for the middle class households. Even the packed milk has a plastic lining inside the packets that gives it longer shelf life.

The packet itself is very expensive. It needs to be investigated as to why only one company, with the collaboration of a multinational, has been given the licence to manufacture the packing. It is an established fact that human milk is most suitable, and free too. Dairy farming too plays a dubious role. Sometimes when the buffalo is unwilling to be milked, it is then given a very harmful injection. The chemical passes into the human body, be it the mother's or the child's. The milkmen, hauling milk long distances, add ice often made from contaminated water and even add some antibiotics which obviously enter the bodies of the users.

Every city has a Gowalamandi where milk is brought in trucks carrying blue plastic barrels that originally came with imported chemicals. It is here that the milkmen readily buy imported dry milk from wholesale markets, to be later used in adulterating milk.

The stories about the various ways to 'reinvent' milk, using even detergents, are too horrifying for most people to believe. Return to the basics or the Nature is the only choice.