

Editorial Advantage of Breastfeeding for Mother and Child**Mohsin Masud Jan**

Editor

Breast milk is the optimal food for newborns as it contains essential amino acids and long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids to help neurological development in the newborn child. It also contains immuno-globulins and lymphocytes to promote immunity and hence is very beneficial to a child's health.

The baby will enjoy a similar immunity to pathogens to which the mother has built up a resistance.

Immuno-globulins (Ig) A, and B, and T lymphocytes are beneficial to the newborn, whose own immune system is still very weak and immature. In the case of preterm infants there is a reduction in the risk of the babies developing necrotizing enter colitis.

The long term benefits of breast milk are also worth considering. Breast milk has been demonstrated to help reduce the risk likelihood of:

- Middle ear infection
- Eczema
- Gastrointestinal infection/gastroenteritis
- Diabetes (both type 1 and type 2)
- Risk of childhood leukaemias
- Obesity

Mothers also can benefit from breastfeeding their babies. It has been demonstrated that for women who choose to breastfeed, there have been observed reductions in Breast Cancer, Ovarian Cancer, Osteoporosis and Uterine contraction.

More than just health benefits for mother and child, breastfeeding has emotional benefits as well.

To give babies the healthiest start in life, the WHO recommends mothers to aim for six months of exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding onwards while other foods are being introduced in the baby's diet.

To that end, breast pumps have been designed to help mothers continue breastfeeding their babies when circumstances prevent the child from feeding directly from the mother.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women all around the world and one out of nine women suffers from this type of cancer. In Pakistan, 43.7 percent of all breast cancer patients die every year. However, early detection and improved treatments are the only way which can reduce the number of deaths by 90 percent and this can be achieved by creating widespread awareness about breast cancer.

Every year 40,000 women die in Pakistan due to breast cancer and Pakistan has the highest rate of breast cancer patients in whole of Asia. One in every nine women in Pakistan is at very high risk of becoming a victim of breast cancer in her lifespan. However, this is the only cancer if diagnosed early, the survival rate increases to more than 90 percent.

Mothers worrying about producing insufficient milk supply is the number one concern mothers have to stop breastfeeding. Insufficient milk supply is mostly a perceived problem, because from a physiological perspective, a decrease in supply should not be expected with regular and effective breastfeeding.

Symptoms of this include mothers not feeling any physiological engorgement; the baby is crying a lot or that the baby shows insufficient weight gain.

The solution to this problem lies in correcting the breast feeding technique, changing the frequency of the feeds and boosting the milk supply by expressing breasts using a breast pump.

On the other hand, mothers also have concerns of producing too much milk, more than their babies can take. Symptoms of this issue include; milk spurting out in forceful sprays in the beginning, and then slowing down; babies gulp and choke when mum has a forceful letdown and will often swallow air and mothers suffering from full, engorged breasts, plugged ducts, and mastitis.

There are many ways to relieve this problem. For example, offer only one breast at each feeding and let the baby feed as long as he wants to on that side. Mothers can also express just enough milk to relieve the discomfort. Usually within a week, a significant decrease in supply occurs adjusting to meet the baby's demands. And if the baby is ill or premature he can be fed on expressed milk until he is able to feed directly from the breast. Breast pumps are recommended to express excess milk and help maintain lactation.

Expressing milk can encourage and build up the milk supply, in addition to regular breastfeeding. The expressed milk can be stored in the fridge or freezer for later use. A whole feed can occasionally be given by someone else other than the mother, once breastfeeding is established. This is an absolute convenience for busy modern mothers.

With the right tools in hand, even in a busy modern society, mothers and their babies can still fully enjoy the many benefits of breastfeeding.