

# Feeding Practice among Infants in Labour Community

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To assess the feeding practices of infants less than 2 years of age.

**Methods:** Five hundred healthy children were included aged between 4 months to 2 years coming to the pediatric outdoor during 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010. The data thus was collected was interpreted at the end. The children with chronic conditions interfering with normal feeding were excluded from the study e.g. children with cleft lip, cleft palate etc. Similarly the children with cerebral palsy who had swallowing difficulties were also excluded from the study.

**Result:** Our study showed that 41% of babies were exclusively breastfed, while mixed pattern of feeding was the predominant pattern of feeding.

**Conclusion:** Mixed pattern is the commonest type of feeding and most of the mothers are still unaware about benefits of breast feeding.

**Key words:** Feeding, Infant, Labour community

## INTRODUCTION

Human milk is the healthiest form of milk for human babies<sup>1</sup>. Breast milk is recommended as the exclusive nutrient source of feeding for first 6 months after birth and should be continued with the addition of solid foods at least through the first 12-24 months. Breast feeding is best for the health of both infants and mother<sup>2</sup>. Benefits for the mother include decreased risk of postpartum hemorrhage, longer period of amenorrhea, reduced risk of breast cancer, and osteoporosis.

Advantages for the baby include decreased incidence or severity of diarrhea, respiratory illness, otitis media, bacteremia, bacterial meningitis, and necrotizing enterocolitis, while advantages to society include reduced healthcare cost owing to lower incidence of illness in breast feeding, it will contribute significantly towards reducing the infant mortality rate, which according to UNICEF right now is one of the biggest challenge for Pakistan<sup>3</sup>.

## METHODOLOGY

This prospective study was carried out in the OPD of Pediatrics The University of Lahore at Social Security Teaching Hospital, Lahore. It is a tertiary care hospital which gets referrals from small dispensaries and medical centers located all over the Punjab. A questionnaire was designed and mothers of babies were interviewed according to that. A total number of 500 babies were included in the study.

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## RESULTS

The data then collected was compiled at the end of study. Results showed that out of 500 babies coming to the OPD. 289 (58%) were male, while 211(42%) were females. Result showed that only 41% of babies were breast fed exclusively while 59% were given artificial feeding either alone or in a mix pattern, along with breast feeding (Table 1).

Table 1: Feeding Practice among babies

Type of feeding	=n	%age
Exclusively breast fed	205	41
Artificial milk	295	59

Table 2: Type of artificial feeding and dilution

Type of feed	=n	%age
Mixed	235	46
Only cows milk	32	8
Only powdered milk	28	6

Table 3: Dilution pattern

Type of dilution	=n	%age
1% dilution 1:1	201	64%
2% dilution 2:1	69	26%
Undiluted	25	10%

Further analysis showed that mix pattern of feeding in which cow's milk was started from early days; along with breast milk was the predominant pattern of feeding (Table 2). Further more in majority of cases

who were given artificial milk was given diluted from, 64% were given in diluted milk 1:1 and 26% in dilution of 2:1, only 10% were given undiluted artificial milk (Table 3).

## DISCUSSION

Pakistan has one of the highest infant and under five mortality rate in the world. 61 Infants die out of 1000 live births every year<sup>4</sup>. Nearly 1 in 10 children does not survive his or her fifth birthday, with the majority of deaths due to diarrhea, pneumonia or vaccine preventable diseases<sup>5</sup>. Lack of exclusive breast feeding is one of the major contributory factors towards high infant mortality rate. Breast feeding helps defend against a numbers of infections, prevent allergies and protect against number of chronic conditions<sup>6</sup>.

Breast milk contains the right balance of nutrients to help your infant grow into a strong and healthy toddler.<sup>7</sup> In breast milk the amino acids are well balanced for the human body, as are the sugars and fats.<sup>8</sup> Exclusive breast feeding is recommended up to 6 month of age with combined breast feeding along with complementary foods up to 2 years of age or beyond<sup>9</sup>.

Our study showed that 41% of infants were exclusively breast fed. This percentage is quite comparable to another survey which code 37% of infants being exclusively breast feed in Pakistan<sup>10</sup>, while figure of 17% infants fed exclusively with breast milk is given by study conducted in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital<sup>11</sup>. UNICEF reports only 16% of babies exclusively breast fed in Pakistan<sup>12</sup>.

Our study also showed that mixed patter of feeding is the predominant pattern of feeding (46%). Cow's milk is the most common form of artificial milk used. However the cow's milk is most frequently being used in diluted form i.e., 1:1 dilution with water. Dilution of milk is used both because of illiteracy as well as poverty, contributing to unhygienic practices as well as less number of calories being fed to the child. Major obstacles to breast feeding are; cultural misconception and myths e.g. breast milk of some mothers is not suitable for babies, it may be dangerous, working women are not facilitated at their work places, many institutes do not provide proper maternity leave and breast feeding is also thought by many to be out of fashion.

In both developed and developing countries artificial feeding is associated with more deaths from diarrhea in infants. In all situations, the best way of preventing morbidity and mortality among infants and young children is to ensure that they start breast feeding within one hour of birth, breast feeding exclusively until 6 months of age. Continue breast

feeding with appropriate complementary foods up to 2 years of age<sup>13</sup>.

Breast feeding has advantages both for babies and infants. Advantages include Health, nutrition, immunologic developmental, psychological, social, economic, environment benefits<sup>14</sup>. Thus the percentage of infants fed with breast milk needs to be raised, as the infants are six times more prone to infectious diseases if were not exclusively breast fed.

It was concluded that the mixed pattern is the commonest type of feeding. Most of the mothers are still unaware about benefits of breast feeding and we need to adopt more organized measures to promote breast feeding.

### Some suggestions for improving breast feeding

- Mothers should be educated regularly for breastfeeding during antenatal visits.
- Separate breastfeeding rooms should be present in hospitals, where mothers can be trained.
- Daycare availability at workplaces.
- Maternity leave rules and regulations.

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