

■ **Letter to Editor**

Knowledge and practice of mothers regarding breast feeding: a hospital based study

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Dear Editor,

I would like to applaud the author for bringing out this information regarding breast-feeding knowledge. Here I would like to add few of my points of view regarding this article.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) emphasize the value of breastfeeding for mothers as well as children. Both recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. The AAP recommends that this be followed by supplemented breastfeeding for at least one year, while WHO recommends that supplemented breastfeeding continue up to two years or more.

Along with the knowledge of feeding the babies, the mother should also be counselled regarding the importance of oral health care of infants as given by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)

Recent studies have shown that Mutans Streptococci can colonize the mouths of predentate infants.¹

Prolonged and exclusive breast-feeding has been associated with many health benefits, including reduced risks of gastrointestinal and respiratory infection, atopic eczema and other allergic diseases, and improved neurocognitive development.²⁻⁴

Several authors⁵⁻⁷ have found human milk to be more cariogenic than cow milk, and it is clear from case reports and case series that breast-feeding, even exclusive breast-feeding, can cause caries in the maxillary incisors, similar to classic 'nursing bottle caries' in bottle-fed infants.⁸⁻¹⁰

Maintenance of proper oral health of the mother/caregiver should also be emphasized. Human milk alone does not cause dental caries. Infants exclusively breastfed are not immune to decay due to other factors that impact the infant's risk for tooth decay. Decay causing bacteria (streptococcus mutans) is transmitted to the infant by way of parents, caregivers, and others.¹¹

Some investigators have observed an increased risk and severity of caries associated with prolonged breast-feeding and night breast-feeding.¹²⁻¹⁵ In order to minimize the potential cariogenic effect of feeding at night, the mother/caregiver should also be counselled regarding how to keep the infants mouth clean.

The feeding methods presented significant association with the presence of non-nutritive sucking habits. As larger the duration of the exclusive breastfeeding, smaller the prevalence of sucking habits.¹⁶

The dangers of bottle feeding should be given more emphasis and counselling should be done also for expecting mothers.

The imparting of breast feeding knowledge is incomplete if oral health is not considered. The current scenario being amalgamation of different specialities who share a hand in glove relationship should definitely emphasize on the paramount need of educating for not only single entity like breast feeding but also should include the importance of oral health thus facilitating in complete well being of an individual.

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