

Breastfeeding Benefits

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Abstract

Background: The best source of nutrition for an infant is Breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is superior for infant as comparison to the normal milk. A secretion of the mammary gland is called human milk with changing composition. Foremilk i.e. colostrum is different in nature in comparison to hindmilk i.e. mature milk. Human milk offer various benefits to both infant and mother because of its composition. This review article highlight the importance of Breastfeeding.

Objective: To study the importance of Breastfeeding.

Method: Various articles have been reviewed from Google Scholar to highlight the importance of Breastfeeding to both infant as well as mother.

Results and Conclusion: Various researches have demonstrated developmental, immunological, health and nutritional, psychological benefits of human milk in both developing as well as developed countries. Hence, breastfeeding should not be regarded as a choice but an important factor for health issue.

Keywords: *Colostrum, Infant feeding, Maternal health.*

Introduction

Proper magnification and development of children to their full prospective is ensured through the proper nutrition during infancy. Extensive researches have been carried out which demonstrates that breastfeeding is considered as an excellent origin of nutrition for a little one and is advantageous for both mother and young one¹.

Breast milk is extremely superior for infant feeding as compared to the normal milk. A discharge of the mammary gland is called human milk with changing composition. Foremilk i.e. colostrum is different in nature in comparison to the hind milk i.e. mature milk. Human milk contains all the nutrients needed for the child for

optimal growth and development. Breast milk composed of various nutritive elements such as proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins and trace elements which are of utmost significance to attain the needs of the nutrition required by an infant. Various components which are immune- related like IgA, leukocytes, lysozyme, lactoferrin, interferon, nucleotides, cytokines and other components are also included in human milk. Various crucial fatty- acids, enzymes, hormones, factors which are growth related, polyamines and other compounds which are active biologically plays an utmost important role in the benefits related to the health associated with breastfeed. Hence, breast milk is a true functional food. It offers both small-term benefits and long-term benefits in context to health and development by not only providing nutrients but also by providing bioactive substances.²

Mothers who are full time employed mostly skip or delay expression of their milk. Major factors which leads to completely wean the children from breastfeed are return to job, insufficiency of milk supply and shortage of pumping time of milk.³

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According to American Dietetic Association, absolute breastfeeding for first 6 months of life deliver proper nourishment to the infant and combined feeding along with breastfeed till 12 months of age is considered as a perfect feeding for infants.⁴

Lactation is considered good for well-being of mother also as it lessen the possibility of ovarian cancer or breast cancer, diabetes (type 2) and postpartum depression. Few researches suggest that lactation reduces the risk of premenopausal breast cancer.⁵

Children who exclusively breastfeed have higher IQ rather than those who does not breastfeed because of the existence of unique fatty acids which exists in mother's milk. Since, breastfeed is an ideal food for infant and risk factor which is modifiable, all women should be encouraged to breastfeed.⁶

Benefits of Breastfeeding:

Prevention of Infections: Breastfeed helps in decreasing the incidence rate and severity of broad range of infections like respiratory tract infections, otitis media, necrotizing enterocolitis, etc.

Protection of Immune System: Exclusive breastfeeding lowers the incidence rate of allergies like asthma, atopic dermatitis, eczema, celiac disease, etc.

Diabetes, Obesity and Cardiovascular Risk: Breastfeeding results in reduction of obesity rates to 15% to 30% in adolescence and adulthood. Breastfeeding also results in decrease in prevalence of insulin dependent (Type 1) diabetes insipidus and non- insulin dependent (Type 2) diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, etc.

Malignant Diseases: Breastfeeding results in lowering the incidence of acute lymphatic leukemia, through stimulation or modulation of the immune response.

Neurodevelopmental Outcomes: Breastfeeding may be associated with an advantage measured in terms of cognitive development which persists into adulthood.

Preterm Infants: Breastfeeding not only decreases the rate of illness after NICU discharge but it also lowers long term failure of growth and neurodevelopmental ailments. Neurodevelopmental consequences includes finer maturation of brainstem, better outcomes on tests (cognitive and developmental tests) and better development of visual system.

Other Health Outcomes: It also results in decreasing the rate of unanticipated death syndrome of infant in the first year of life.

Maternal Health Benefits: It has numerous benefits on maternal health also like increase in concentration of oxytocin, decreasing the blood loss during menstruation, decreases chance of breast cancer and ovarian cancer, reduce possibility of postpartum depression, lactational amenorrhea, promotes bonding as well.

Benefits for Community: Various benefits of breastfeeding includes reduction in annual health care estimate and healthful living programs, decreases absenteeism of parental employee with association of loss of income of family, reduce vigour demands for manufacture and transfer of unnatural feeding products.⁷

Discussion

Human milk has a balance of nutrients which includes carbohydrates, cholesterol, essential fatty acids, long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, saturated fatty acids, medium chain triglycerides, low protein and sodium content as well as an ideal ratio of calcium-phosphorus that makes it easily digestible. According to WHO, the infants should be breastfed exclusively for 6 months.

The evidences report that breastfeeding is important and gold-standard for infants in terms of regulating growth and development, providing proper nutrition, developing immune response and to post-partum women as well in order to improve their health, lose weight, decrease post-partum depression and evidences of certain illnesses.

Cognitive development also has been found to be enhanced with breastfeeding due to genetic variations in metabolism of fatty acids. Studies have also suggested that DHA and AA needed for intellectual development are linked with altered gene expressions in synaptic plasticity. Thus, it can be said that human milk or breast feeding for infants is crucial for an overall development and is irreplaceable immunological source.⁸

Conclusion

Various researches have shown that breastfeed can offer various significant benefits to infant, mother as well as community. We should support breastfeed as it is the most cost- efficient way which helps in minimizing the possibility of disorders as well as mortality. Breastfeed

should be supervised as a major public health issue. Healthcare providers play a vital role in promoting breastfeeding. Moreover, there should be proper facilities to promote the awareness and supporting the campaign of breastfeeding.

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Conflict of Interest: Nil

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