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REVIEW ARTICLE

BREASTFEEDING- A BOON OR BANE

Mouli Biswas¹, Ritu²

¹PGT, ²Dept. of Pediatrics, Bakson Homoeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Noida

Abstract

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Corresponding Author:- Mouli Biswas, PGT, Dept. of Pediatrics, Bakson Homoeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Noida

Breastfeeding is the most important and crucial phase of a women's as well as of a child's life. Child nutrition starts from having mother's milk continuous for 6 months right after the birth. Breast milk provides all the necessary nutrition and immunoglobins require for the growth and development of a child. With the benefits of nutritional values and positive physical impact of breastfeeding there are also psychological effects of breastfeeding on mothers as well as on children. Many women experience breastfeeding difficulties. Sometimes these difficulties lead to breastfeeding cessation. There are lots to know about breastfeeding. Let's have a look at the basics of breastfeeding.

INTRODUCTION

"Breastfeeding is a mother's gift to herself, her baby and the earth." – Pamela K. Wiggins.

Breastfeeding is when you feed your baby breast milk, usually directly from your breast.

WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding (EBF), that is the situation in which an infant receives only breast milk from his/her mother or a wet nurse for the first 6 months and no other solids or liquid with the exception of drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, minerals, supplements or medicines.

The Physiology Of Breastfeeding

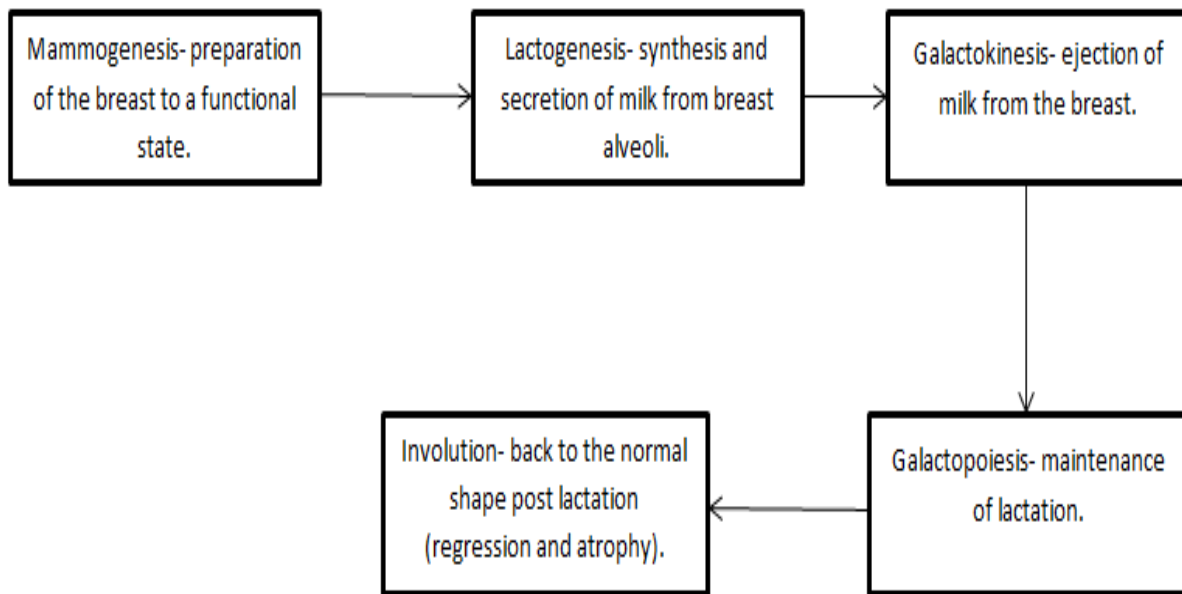


Fig 1 The Physiology Of Breastfeeding

STAGES OF BREAST MILK: 3 following stages that took place.

1. **Colostrum-** It is high in protein, fat soluble vitamins, minerals and immune globulins. IgA is the most abundant immune globulin that is found in colostrum. It consists of 90% of antibodies present in breast milk. Other immune globulins present in breast milk are IgM and IgG but concentration is much at lower level. Colostrum continues for 2 to 5 days after birth of the child. (~2.5gm/L).
2. **Transitional milk-** 2-5 days after birth, colostrum will be replaced by transitional milk. Approximately lasts for 2 weeks. This transitional milk includes high level of fats, lactose and water-soluble vitamins. It carries more calories than colostrum. Transitional milk continues for 8 to 12 days. (~1gm/L).
3. **Mature milk-** It is the final milk that is produced during the period of lactation. Mature milk consists of 90% of water which is necessary to keep infant hydrated and 10% of carbohydrate, proteins and fats which are necessary for both growth and energy of the infant. Mature milk continues for 26 to 30 days. (~0.7gm/L).
Mature milk then again segregated in two parts, that is, fore milk and hind milk.
 - **Fore milk-** It is the milk which is secreted during the beginning of feeding and contains water, vitamins and protein.

- **Hind milk-** It is the milk which is secreted after the initial release of milk. Contains higher level of fats and necessary for weight gain.

Let's Understand About Milk Let Down Reflex Or Milk Ejection Reflex- This reflex is set up during suckling.

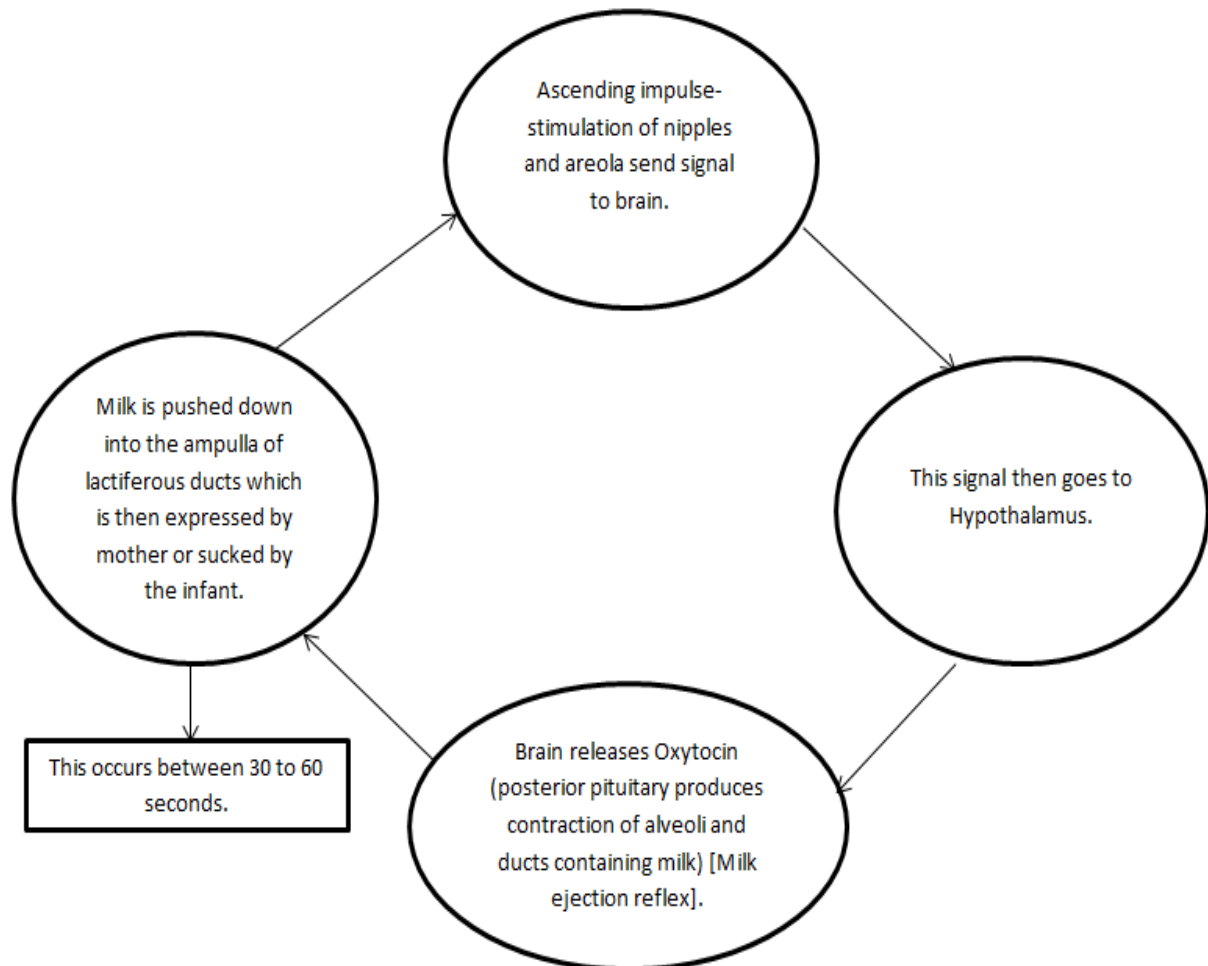


Fig 2 Milk Reflex

Psychological Effects That An Infant Brain And A New Mother Goes Through The Phase Of Breast Feeding.

There are research evidences for a link between breastfeeding and cognitive development which includes improved memory retention, greater language skills and intelligence. With respect of brain

development, there are potential research evidence where it was indicated that breastfed child has more cognitive and brain development than a bottle-fed child. It was judged using extensive methodologies such as- EEG and MRI. Breastfeeding also play important role in social and emotional development in

children. It is evident that breast fed child have “vigor” than bottle fed child at an age of 3 months.

Breastfeeding can be boon as well as bane to the women. Breastfeeding develops attachment and bonding between the mother and the child. But during this journey of nursing and nurturing the infant, a woman goes through several kinds of phases which somewhere also have impact on the mental health of the mother. A mother faces both positive and negative impact on the psychological sphere. There are research evidences that breastfeeding reduces stress, positive mood, low anxiety level etc., in comparison to bottle fed mothers. Likewise, there are also negative impacts like- anger, postpartum depression, anxiety, etc.

Common Conditions For Mother Are:

1. **Breast Engorgement-** Overabundance production of milk leads to breast engorgement. If giving a feed to an infant is not on time and production of milk is also on higher side; formation of lump takes place. There is bluish appearance of breasts and hardness of breasts is also appreciated during this phase. Mother has to remove the lump by applying hot fermentation. Within 24-72 hours should be expected but as it may become dangerous for the infant during suckling.
2. **Sore Nipples-** Sore nipple is a common problem faced by a new mother. There is a “pins and needles” tingling feeling during the nursing. Usually, it is short lived as it gets “toughen up” after the few sucklings done by the infant. But if the problem persists, it is recommended for the mother to take the treatment as soon as possible as it can become major hindrance to feed your baby.
3. **Cracked Nipples-** Cracked nipples is again a very common condition faced by a new mother during establishing breastfeeding. It is characterized by red, irritated and scabbed skin around the nipple. It is usually occurred due to nipple trauma when a baby does not have proper latch or when position is not proper. It becomes very difficult for a mother to nurse her child due to the irritation and pain over the nipples. It is better to apply cream over the nipples after each feed and cleaning before the next consecutive feeds. Even applying breast milk is also helpful to reduce the cracks on nipples and keeping it moist as it has antibacterial properties.
4. **Mastitis-** It is an infection of breast tissues. Mastitis can cause fever, muscles and breast pain and redness. It occurs when the milk ducts are clogged and the trapped breast milk

gets infected with bacteria when baby tries to suck on it. 10% of women go through this within the first 6 weeks of delivery. It is better to see your doctor and get the treatment done. Breast feeding can be continued during this phase while a mother is on her treatment for infection.

5. **Low Milk Supply-** There are majority of reasons that can lead to low milk supply. Although, this is not so common in a woman rather, there is extra one-third production of milk than their babies typically drink. But there are some factors that can lead to low milk supply; such as, waiting too long to start breast feeding, not breast feeding often enough, supplementing breast feeding, an ineffective latch and use of certain medications. Sometimes previous breast surgery affects milk production. Other factors like premature birth, maternal obesity, pregnancy induced hyper tension, etc. can also lead to low milk supply. It is recommended for a mother to follow some of the ways to avoid low milk supply. Those are; start breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery, breast feeding often, latch your baby properly, don't skip breast feeding sessions, and avoid alcohol and nicotine. Maintaining your milk supply

during breast feeding is important for your baby's health and growth.

6. **Pain During Feeding-** Pain during breast feeding is another very common condition that a new mother had to face. It usually happens when baby chew or bite your nipples while nursing. This usually happens when latch is not proper or because of low milk supply, when baby do not get adequate amount of milk. Another situation is, when you feed your baby excess than what he/she desire, to stop the supply your baby might bite your nipples. In case of overabundance of milk, baby bites the nipple to slow down the milk supply while he swallows. These are some of the conditions a mother should take care of while breast feeding.

Common Conditions For Babies Are:

1. **Poor latch-** Poor latching is one of the common conditions that are faced by the baby as well as the mother. If you sense that your baby is not having rhythmic swallowing and there is discomfort while nursing your baby then it can be supposed that latching is not proper. You may feel nipple pain; it is because your baby may chew on your nipple instead of gumming the areola. When baby is latched proper you will know- baby's chin and tip of nose are

touching your breast, lips are flanged out and rhythmic suck-swallow-breath pattern of suckling will be followed.

2. **Over-feeding-** Another common condition your baby had to face is abdominal pain and flatulence. When you are not able to appreciate that your baby has completed having desired amount of breast milk; instead, you continue with the feeding, this can lead your baby to over feed and subsequently abdominal pain and discomfort can take place. Hence, it is recommended to a mother to keep sincere watch on her feeds.
3. **Tongue-tie-** It a medical condition where the frenulum is too short and tight. In this condition your baby might have trouble nursing due to the restricted movement of the tongue.
4. **High or arched palate-** This is the condition where roof of the mouth is shaped high than normal. In some cases, it is congenital or sometimes acquired in babies who have the habit of thumb sucking. In this case your baby might have poor latch leading to sore nipples and short feeding.
5. **Premature or low birth weight baby-** In such conditions breast feeding is not so normal and effective than a term infant. It is seen in

maximum cases of premature or low birth weight infants that first breast feeding is always delayed and even infants refuse to take the breast milk. Most of the time it is seen that infants are not on exclusive breast feeding and rather mix regime is continued for them that is both breast feeding and bottle feeding. In some cases, it is seen that, mother produces adequate amount of milk but unable to feed their baby. There is shorter duration of feeding due to failure to establish effective infant suckling.

Homoeopathic Medicines That Can Help A Mother To Curtail Down The Difficulties During Breast Feeding

1. ***Agnus castus-*** Can be given to a mother who supply low milk during lactation accompanied with depression.
2. ***Arnica montana-*** Can be used when nipples are sore. Also, in condition of mastitis.
3. ***Belladonna-*** Useful in first stage of mastitis. Mother feels pain, throbbing, redness. Intense pain radiates from nipple. Breasts feel hard and red.
4. ***Borax-*** Can be thought of when there is overabundance of milk production.
5. ***Calcarea Carbonica-*** Given when milk is too abundant; disagreeable to

- the child. Deficient lactation, with distended breasts.
6. **Graphites-** Useful for sore, cracked and blistered nipples.
 7. **Lac Caninum-** Useful in milk supply problem. Helps to dry up milk. Also stimulates production of milk.
 8. **Phellandrium Aquaticum-** Useful in mastitis. Pain in milk ducts; intolerable between nursing.
 9. **Phosphoricum Acidum-** Useful in low milk supply. Health of mother deteriorated from nursing.
 10. **Phytolacca Decandra-** Useful in mastitis, where breasts are hard and very sensitive. When child nurses, pain radiates from the nipple, all over the body. Presence of cracks and small ulcers around nipples. Also useful in over production of breast milk.
 11. **Ricinus Communis-** Helps in increasing the quantity of milk in nursing women.
 12. **Secale Cornutum-** Helpful in low milk supply where breasts do not fill properly.
 13. **Urtica Urens-** This is a remedy for agalactia.

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