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Breastfeeding- The Myths & Facts!

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With the theme of Breast feeding week 2018 – “Foundation of life”, everyone knows that breast feeding is a precious God's gift to mother but its always a big challenge for first time mother to understand how to feed ?, how much to feed ?, when to feed ?, to give best to her baby.

Newer generation mothers always face difficulties in balancing between old myths and modern lifestyle. So breast feeding week is the best way to discuss about this.

Breast milk is the natural, unequalled high balance of carbohydrate, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals that is easier to digest and absorb by your baby. Colostrum, breast milk produced after delivery is the perfect first food for your baby as it is similar to receiving first vaccination because colostrum is filled with antibodies and immunoglobulin A (IgA). Colostrum is also rich in protective white cells called leukocytes which defend against microbes. Thus breast milk boost immunity. The chances of infection like diarrhoea, cholera are higher in bottle feed babies as compared to breastfeed ones. Breast milk also ensures lesser chances of diabetes in children by as much as 35%, reduces risk of childhood cancers and heart disease later in life.

Breastfeeding also contributes to the health of well being of mother. It helps space children, reduce the risk of ovarian cancer, breast cancer by as much as 25%. Breastfeeding women recovers faster and easier from childbirth as hormone such as Oxytocin help the uterus to return to normalcy quicker and reduces Postpartum bleeding. The benefits also extends to effortlessly losing the weight gain during pregnancy.

While breastfeeding is a natural act but it is also a learned behavior. Motivation and right way of feeding baby so as to give support to mother for establishing and sustaining best breast feeding practices is important.

Myth- You need to nurse every 2 hours around the clock to make sure your baby gets enough.

Truth- Just like adults, babies too have their own individual eating patterns. Most babies fall into the routine of feeding once every 2 hours. "Watch the baby and not the clock". Feed your baby on demand. One way to look whether your baby is feeding enough is to observe their output ie; 6 wet diapers and 2 - 3 stools per day is an indicator of healthy baby.

Also better your child is latched on to your nipple, longer and adequately he or she will feed. Breast milk is also ideal for preterm babies.

Myth- Start formula feed as baby not sleeping in night with breast milk.

Truth- Sleep depends on personality and sleeping patterns of your baby. As long as your baby is getting enough to eat, she or he will sleep for as long as meant to sleep.

Myth- If baby is feeding more or sleeping less that means milk secretion is not adequate.

Truth- This is a common misconception. In reality only 1% of women can not physically produce enough breast milk. The truth is that, the breast milk is easy to digest and absorb as compared to formula feed, so frequent feedings are required. This is absolutely normal for your baby to feed frequently in the beginning because their stomach are so small at birth.

Myth- Mother must eat only bland foods while breastfeeding.

Truth- By the time the foods you eat have been digested and used to make breast milk, the potentially upsetting elements have been broken down and should not affect your baby at all. i.e. if you eat cabbage or broccoli, it is unlikely that it will make your baby gassy. Do not change your feeding habits. Keep yourself well hydrated.

Myth- Your breast will forever sag after breast feed.

Truth- The breast often doubles in weight during pregnancy. Whether or not you breast fed, increase in breast during pregnancy put extra stress on the ligaments that support the breast and more stress equals extra sagging. Your age, BMI, pre pregnancy bra size, all affects how likely your breasts will drop.

Myth- Breastfeeding causes pain and sore nipples.

Truth- The fact is that such discomfort is usually a result of an improper latch and so entirely preventable. Learn to latch correctly with your pediatrician and gynecologist.

Myth- Should not nurse if you have blocked ducts.

Truth- Best way to treat blocked duct is to nurse as often as you can to prevent infections. Besides frequent nursing, apply hot fomentation before nursing. If you develop infection, consult your gynecologist.

Myth- Breastfeeding is a reliable form of birth control.

Truth- Even if you exclusively breastfeed, ovulation and chance of becoming pregnant start after 3 months of delivery. So consult before that for contraception.

Mothers who breastfeed burn around 300 to 500 extra calories per day as compared to those who give formula feed and researchs have shown that they do tend to slim down faster.

To conclude important points to be considered by our mothers are initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of life; exclusive breastfeeding for 6 month i.e. infant only receives breast milk without any additional food or drink or even water; breastfeeding on demand i.e. as often as the child wants and no use of bottles, teats or pacifiers to have a healthy mother with healthy baby for whole life.

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