

REVIEW ARTICLE

Review on Breastfeeding Techniques

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding confers short term and long term benefits to both child and mother, ensuring the protection of the child against various acute and chronic disorders. Breastfeeding technique is defined as the composite of positioning, attachment and suckling during breastfeeding. Effective breastfeeding is an outcome of the proper positioning of mother and baby and also the attachment of baby to mother's breast.

Aims and Objective: To review the effective breastfeeding technique and associated factors in lactating mothers.

Methodology: relevant data will be collected and reviewed from various textbooks, indexed journals and authentic website.

Result: To recommend that every breastfeeding mother should be educated about effective breastfeeding techniques.

Discussion: The practice of good positioning and attachment during lactation plays a great role in the practice of breastfeeding, also a baby who breast feeds effectively shows readiness for feeding and latches on deeply at the breast that satisfies the infant's nutritional requirements and maintains the mother's comfort. Hence education of effective breastfeeding techniques is the ideal way of promoting effective breastfeeding.

KEYWORDS

• Breastfeeding • Breastfeeding technique • Positioning

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INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is the practice of feeding a child directly from the breast or through expressed milk by hand or with a pump. It is a natural and essential practice that provides optimal nutrition and promotes the overall health and development of infants.¹ Breast milk is the natural food for an infant and it is 'species specific'.²

Breast milk is an ideal food for neonates. It is the best gift that a mother can give to her baby. It contains all the nutrients for normal growth and development of a baby from the time of birth to the first 6 months of life.³

Breastfeeding has numerous short-term and long-term benefits for the mother and the child.¹ It has documented short and long term medical and neurodevelopmental advantages and rare contraindications such because if maternal health conditions like HIV, Tuberculosis infection, varicella-zoster, Herpes simplex, Hepatitis B infection, chemotherapy etc.⁴

Early initiation of breastfeeding, within one hour of birth, protects the newborn from acquiring infection and reduces newborn mortality.

According to global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development, and health. Thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues up to two years or beyond.⁵

Normal breastfeeding requires production and release of appropriate amount of milk from the breast and ability of the baby to remove the milk from the breast with effective suckling. The manner in which the baby is attached at the breast will determine how successfully these two elements go together. It is also observed that most breastfeeding difficulties can be avoided if good attachment and positioning are achieved at the first and early feeds. An effective sucking technique is considered important to establish breastfeeding, ensure milk transfer, and prevent breastfeeding problems.⁶

Effective breastfeeding technique is a process of breastfeeding that occurs when the baby and mother show readiness for it, and

the baby is appropriately positioned, has good attachment, and has good suckling. Effective breastfeeding techniques are essential for women to feed their babies without pain, in a simple, safe, and time saving manner. Proper attachment, positioning and suckling during breastfeeding offer a range of benefits for both the mother and the infant.¹

The present article aims at reviewing various text books, articles and other sources of knowledge regarding techniques for effective breastfeeding of the baby. The article also makes certain recommendations that can be adopted by healthcare professionals to promote painless and successful breastfeeding journey of a mother and baby.

Breastfeeding Techniques:

Breastfeeding should be initiated within an hour of birth instead of waiting several hours as is often customary. Although there is little milk at that time, it helps to establish feeding and a close mother-child relationship, known as "bonding".⁷

Mothers require substantial assistance to learn the technique of breastfeeding. With correct technique, breastfeeding is natural and a pleasurable experience for the mother.⁸

Establishment of proper breastfeeding depends mainly on proper positioning and attachment of the baby to the mother's breast. With Proper positioning and attachment breastfeeding will be painless, satiates the hunger leading to good growth and development of the baby.⁹

It can be analysed that the 2 important criteria of breastfeeding technique are:

A. Positioning:

- i. **Position of the mother:** The mother can assume any position that is comfortable to her and the baby. She can sit or lie down. Her back should be well supported and she should not be leaning on her baby⁸.
- ii. **Position of the baby:** Support whole of baby, keeping head, neck and trunk in the same plane¹⁰. Baby's body turned towards the mother (abdomens of the baby and the mother touching each other). Baby's nose is at the level of the nipple¹⁰.

B. Attachment: Proper "attachment" or "latchment" is the indeed the key for successful breastfeeding and both the

nipple and areola must be effectively grasped by the baby. For effective sucking, the baby must form an effective seal around the nipple and areola to eject the milk from lacteal sinuses. If the baby sucks only at the nipple, the milk is not ejected. When baby does not get sufficient milk, he sucks more vigorously resulting in sore nipples.¹¹

Signs of good “attachment” or “latching” for proper feeding.¹²

- Baby’s mouth is wide open.
- Chin of the baby touches the breast.
- Nipple and most of the areola are inside the baby’s mouth.
- Lower lip is turned outwards.
- Mother feels no pain or discomfort while breastfeeding.

Common breastfeeding positions:

Following are some of the common breastfeeding positions recommended by UNICEF.¹³

1. Cradle hold position
2. Cross-cradle hold position
3. Under-arm hold, Football hold or Rugby hold position
4. Side lying position position
5. Reclining position position

Description of breastfeeding positions:¹⁴

Cradle hold position: the baby faces the mother and she supports his neck, back and shoulders. The baby is held in the arm nearest the breast he is going to feed from. When the baby is ready to feed he will tilt his head back, the mouth will open wide and this head extension allows the receding lower jaw of the baby to fit comfortably against the breast. The baby comes closely onto the breast so that mother’s breast is deep in the baby’s mouth ideally at the junction of the hard and soft palate or the comfort zone with his nose free to breathe. The baby then snuggles up close and begins to breastfeed.

1. **Cross cradle hold:** is a position that may work well for small babies and is often taught at breastfeeding preparation classes and in the hospital after the birth of the baby. The baby faces the mother and she supports his neck, back and shoulders. The baby is held with the arm opposite the

breast he is going to feed from and when ready to feed the baby will tilt his head back and his mouth will open wide. The baby then snuggles up close and begins to breastfeed.

2. **Under-arm hold, Football hold or Rugby hold:** helpful position when breastfeeding a premature baby and can also be a good position when breastfeeding twins at the breast together. The baby is positioned at the side of the mother supported on a pillow. The mother with her hand and wrist support the baby’s neck, back and shoulders and her fingers rest behind the baby’s ears. The baby comes closely onto the breast so that mother’s breast is deep in the baby’s mouth ideally at the junction of the hard and soft palate or the comfort zone with his nose free to breathe. The baby then snuggles up close and begins to breastfeed.
3. **Side lying position:** The mother lies on her side with her neck and back supported and comfortable. The baby lies close to the mother with her arm, opposite the breast baby is going to feed from, supporting the baby and ensuring safety. The baby’s nose is near the nipple allowing the baby to feel the nipple and smell the breastmilk. The baby then comes closely onto the breast so that mother’s breast is deep in the baby’s mouth ideally at the junction of the hard and soft palate or the comfort zone with his nose free to breathe. The baby then snuggles up close and begins to breastfeed.
4. **Reclining position:** it is also known as laid Back Breastfeeding or biological nurturing is a ‘mother centred approach to breastfeeding’ and having her baby close or in the natural ‘habitat’. Mother leans back and the baby is placed on top so that every part of the baby is facing, touching and closely applied to the mother’s body curvature

Problems in breastfeeding:

A variety of breastfeeding problems do occur in large proportion of mothers require counselling and support from the health providers for their prevention and appropriate treatment.⁸

Nipple Pain – it is one of the commonest complaints of breastfeeding mothers in the immediate postpartum period. Poor infant

positioning and improper latch are the most common reasons for nipple pain beyond the mild discomfort felt early in the breastfeeding.¹⁵

Inverted nipple – truly inverted or retracted nipples make latching difficult. As baby is not able to take nipple and areola in the mouth properly, sucking on the nipples makes them sore and excoriated.¹⁶

Engorgement – in the 2nd stage of lactogenesis, physiologic fullness of the breast occurs. Breasts may become engorged: firm, overfilled and painful as the pattern and volume of milk production adjusts to the infant's feeding schedule. Incomplete removal of milk as a result of poor breastfeeding technique or infant illness can cause engorgement.¹⁵

DISCUSSION

Breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition and promotes the child's growth and development. It is a natural and instinctive process and nearly all mothers can do it. It is an art and a skill which needs to be learned and mastered.

It provides optimal nutrition and promotes the child's growth and development. Primiparous inexperienced mothers will require assistance in the beginning their breastfeeding journey. Ensuring exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months has a potential to reduce less than 5 mortality rate by 13%, by far the most effective intervention that is known to reduce newborn and child deaths.

To accrue the maximum benefits, the breastfeeding must be exclusive (only breast milk; nothing other than breast milk except vitamin drops, if indicated), initiated within an hour of birth and continued through first 6 months after birth.³

Breastfeeding mothers require proper assistance and technique for effective breastfeeding of the baby. Specifically in cases such as primi mother, mother who had faced breastfeeding problems in previous pregnancy, ignorant/non motivated mothers about breastfeeding and mothers with retracted nipples education about breastfeeding techniques plays vital role.

Adopting correct breastfeeding techniques enables good attachment of the baby to the mother's breast; this in turn helps in establishment of exclusive breastfeeding to the baby resulting in successful lactation.

Effective breastfeeding techniques include proper attachment, positioning and suckling will offer wide range of benefits for both the infant and the baby. With Proper positioning and attachment breastfeeding will be painless, satiates the hunger leading to good growth and development of the baby.

Recommendation:

- Primi para mothers, mothers below the age of twenty years and those who had no formal education deserve more support, attention and guidance to make sure that they can effectively breastfeed their baby.
- Healthcare facilitators should enhance skills and get updated timely through trainings /workshops focusing to improve the education and counselling regarding breastfeeding and its importance to the pregnant mother during antenatal checkups.
- It would also be better if mothers and family are demonstrated with skills of positioning and proper attachment, following this; they should be observed by the healthcare facilitator while they breast feed their baby on immediate postnatal care and give a feedback on their performance to achieve proper attachment and positioning.
- Post delivery, during the discharge as part of advise on discharge, the mother and her family should be educated regarding issues on infant feeding, breast engorgement, breast and nipple care.
- Further scope for research in relation with attributes and consequences of effective breastfeeding vs. improper breastfeeding in relation to infant's growth and development can be studied.

CONCLUSION

A child who is breast-fed has greater chances of survival than a child artificially fed. Prolonged breastfeeding does protect the infant from early malnutrition and some infections⁷. Learning to breast feed can take time, practice and patience.

Finding latching technique that works for mother and the baby will make the breastfeeding journey happy and comfortable.

Successful breastfeeding depends on proper

positioning and attachment of the baby to the mother's breast. Thus adapting correct position and good attachment are the keys for painless and successful breastfeeding, which in turn ensures adequate nourishment growth of the baby. Education regarding effective breastfeeding techniques is the ideal way of promoting effective breastfeeding.

Hence it can be concluded that practice of good positioning and attachment during lactation plays a great role in the practice of breastfeeding, also a baby who breast feeds effectively shows readiness for feeding and latches on deeply at the breast that satisfies the infant's nutritional requirements and maintains the mother's comfort.

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