

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18203/2320-1770.ijrcog20230130>

Original Research Article

## Awareness, knowledge about breast feeding practices among urban mothers

Jyotsna A., Vijayalakshmi K.\*, Ranoji Shinde

Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Chettinad Hospital and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu, India

**Received:** 30 November 2022

**Revised:** 31 December 2022

**Accepted:** 02 January 2023

**\*Correspondence:**

Dr. Vijayalakshmi K.,

E-mail: [d\\_viji\\_kands@yahoo.co.in](mailto:d_viji_kands@yahoo.co.in)

**Copyright:** © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The knowledge and awareness about breast feeding practices is influenced by educational qualification, type of family and support from the family. Till date in India under- 5 mortality rate is mostly due to improper nutrition to the children since birth and infectious diseases among children. The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge and awareness about breast feeding practices among urban women attending a tertiary care hospital Chennai, India.

**Methods:** This hospital based; prospective, cross-sectional study was carried out among 200 antenatal women who visited a tertiary care hospital in Chennai. The data regarding the knowledge and awareness about breast feeding practices was collected.

**Results:** Knowledge about breast feeding practices like time of initiation, food that facilitate the secretion of breast milk is more among educated mothers. The type of family also showed a significant effect on the awareness about breast feeding. Proper posture of breast feeding was also not known to most of the antenatal mothers.

**Conclusions:** Antenatal women had poor knowledge about the posture of breast feeding, but awareness about the initiation of breast feeding, period of breast feeding and weaning period was satisfactory. Awareness about breast milk banking and storage of breast milk was also poor.

**Keywords:** Breast feeding, Knowledge, Awareness, Breast milk banking

### INTRODUCTION

Breast feeding is very important as it satisfies all the physiological demands of a new born that is, contact with the mother, caters to the nutritional demand for the development of the new born.<sup>1</sup> It is recommended by the world health organization that breast feeding should be initiated immediately after delivery and it should be continued as exclusive feeding till 6 months of age followed by weaning along with substitution of alternative foods.<sup>2</sup> But in affluent societies breast feeding is now a lost art due to cosmetic purpose and there is a rise in bottle feeding.<sup>14</sup> There are several advantages of breast feeding both for the baby and mother in terms of nutritional benefits, providing antibodies, antioxidants, calories and

growth factors necessary for the proper development of the infant. Advantages for the mother, who gives breast feeding include psychological bonding with her new born, adequate nutrition to her child along with added benefits of post-partum weight loss, contraception and reestablishing hormonal rhythm.<sup>3</sup> It also reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancers in post-menopausal age and also reduces the chances of post-menopausal bleeding.<sup>15</sup> Even though breast feeding is feasible and effective, under 5 mortality rates of India in 2020 according to WHO is 33 per thousand live births which is quite high.<sup>4</sup> Promoting awareness among the antenatal women and evaluating the effective outcomes will help to promote breast feeding practices and bring down morbidity and mortality among children.<sup>5</sup> Breast feeding practices are mostly influenced

by the religious, psychosocial factors, and in the recent times by profession and career.<sup>6</sup> Key to achieve good breast feeding is by Information, Education and Communication strategies.<sup>13</sup> This study aims to assess the knowledge about breast feeding and also awareness about modern methods and practices in breast feeding.

## METHODS

### Study design, location and duration

Current study was a hospital based cross sectional study conducted among antenatal women who visited a tertiary hospital conducted at Chettinad hospital and research institute for a period of 6 months from June 2021 to November 2021.

### Selection criteria

Antenatal women who visit hospital and willing to go through questionnaire. Women who were not interested in the study were excluded. The questionnaire was given only after a proper informed and written consent was obtained. 200 antenatal women were included in the study.

Antenatal women were interviewed about the knowledge of time for initiation of breast feeding, frequency, weaning, foods that would enhance milk secretion, position during feeding, benefits to the mother due to breast feeding. Awareness about recent advances like preserving techniques of breast milk, breast milk banks were also administered to the women, responses were collected and counselling was given to the women regarding breast feeding.

## RESULTS

Considering the breast-feeding awareness with educational qualification of the antenatal patients, on comparison it was concluded that women who are graduates are more aware about the technique, frequency and benefits of breast feeding (38.5%) (Table 1) than women who studied till primary, secondary school.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of patients.**

Variables	N	%
<b>Educational qualification of the mother</b>		
Primary school & lower	58	29.00
Secondary school	65	32.50
University or higher	77	38.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>Type of family</b>		
Joint family	110	55.00
Nuclear	90	45.00
Total	200	100.00

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not equal 100%.

Type of family is also imparting a significant impact on the breast-feeding practice, like women in joint families

are more informed about breast feeding (55%) than in nuclear families.

**Table 2: Knowledge based distribution.**

Variable	N	%
<b>Time period to initiate breast feeding after delivery</b>		
Immediately after delivery	78	39.00
2 hrs after delivery	57	28.50
6 hrs after delivery	28	14.00
Only when baby cries	37	18.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>Posture during breast feeding</b>		
Sitting position	48	24.00
Lying down position	49	24.50
Whatever position mother is comfortable in	49	24.50
Squatting position	54	27.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Is colostrum beneficial to the baby</b>		
Yes	110	55.00
No	90	45.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>The frequency of feed to the baby</b>		
Twice a day	39	19.50
Thrice a day	65	32.50
As per the demand of the baby	62	31.00
Once a day	34	17.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Types of food helps in increasing the secretion of breast milk</b>		
Garlic	44	22.00
Milk and milk products	44	22.00
Meat and leafy vegetables	38	19.00
All the above	74	37.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Duration of breast-feeding during post-natal period</b>		
2 months	40	20.00
5 months	37	18.50
6 months	82	41.00
2 years	41	20.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>The weaning time period</b>		
6 months	55	27.50
1 year	56	28.00
2 years	51	25.50
3 years	38	19.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Daily frequency of breast feeding</b>		
5-6 times	63	31.50
2-3 times	66	33.00
Once daily	71	35.50
Total	200	100.00

Among data collected 200 antenatal mothers only 39% of them are aware that breast feeding should be initiated

immediately after delivery (Table 2-3). Only 24 % have an idea about the posture. of the studied group benefits of colostrum is known to 55% only and 37 % of the antenatal women are aware about the food that will help to facilitate breast milk secretion. Frequency of the breast feeding, weaning period is known to about 30% of the studied group. Benefits of breast feeding to the mother like contraception were known to 55% of the population and methods of storage of breast milk is known to 27% of the participants.

**Table 3: Knowledge based distribution.**

Variable	N	%
<b>Benefits of breast feeding to the mother</b>		
Weight loss	45	22.50
Involution of uterus	43	21.50
Attachment to the baby	47	23.50
All the above	65	32.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>Breast feeding help in spacing</b>		
Yes	103	51.50
No	97	48.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>Is breast feeding better than formula feed</b>		
Yes	106	53.00
No	94	47.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Is family attitude and support towards breast feeding at home necessary</b>		
Yes	114	57.00
No	86	43.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Breast feeding be done by working women</b>		
Yes	110	55.00
No	90	45.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Is expressed breast milk better alternative for working mother</b>		
Yes	122	61.00
No	78	39.00
Total	200	100.00

## DISCUSSION

Knowledge about correct breast-feeding practices among antenatal women is very crucial for the benefit of both mother and baby after delivery. So, it is very important to keep the antenatal women well informed about breast feeding methodology. In the above study only 39% of the participants were aware that breast feeding should be initiated immediately after delivery which will benefit both mother and baby. This number is lower compared to the study which was conducted by Dharmalingam et al where it was around 61%. This clearly depicts that prior counselling is very important among the antenatal women.<sup>7,8</sup>

**Table 3: Awareness based distribution.**

Variables	N	%
<b>Are you aware that you can breast feeding be done in public places</b>		
Yes	104	52.00
No	96	48.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Are you aware of breast milk bank</b>		
Yes	109	54.50
No	91	45.50
Total	200	100.00
<b>Storage method for breast milk</b>		
Refrigeration	55	27.50
Room temperature	53	26.50
Pasteurization	50	25.00
No specific method	42	21.00
Total	200	100.00
<b>Free to discuss your doubts about breast feeding with other mothers</b>		
Yes	113	56.50
No	87	43.50
Total	200	100.00

In the study conducted among antenatal women in Orissa by Mohapatra et al 76% of the participants knew about the time for initiation of breast feeding in contrast to the present study where the percentage is only 39%. Study conducted in Kerala showed only 45% of the antenatal women aware about importance of colostrum.<sup>9,10</sup> The importance of colostrum was known to 55% of the participants in our study but in a study conducted among Orissa women the numbers are slightly higher (66.4%)<sup>9</sup>. Much higher percentage (93.5%) of the women know about demand breast feeding in a study conducted by Girish et al when compared to the above study which shows only 31%.<sup>10</sup> This study shows that only 22% of the women are aware of the benefits to the mother by means of breast feeding which is very low percentage when compared to the study conducted in West Bengal by De et al which was 32.3%.<sup>11</sup> Awareness about exclusive breast feeding in the present study is 44% which is much higher when compared to the study conducted by Bashir et al where the percentage is only 27.7%.<sup>12</sup> The above study shows that family support is also very important to promote proper breast-feeding practices.

## Limitations

Limitations of the current study were due to antenatal women who are not willing to go through questionnaire the sample size was only 200 which may not be enough for an in-depth study. The time frame of the study was only 6 months which is very short.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the awareness about the technique, timing of the initiation of breast feeding and this

knowledge among the antenatal women is low. This research reflects that proper and thorough antenatal counselling about breast feeding practices is very important for the wellbeing of both mother and baby.

*Funding: No funding sources*

*Conflict of interest: None declared*

*Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee*

## REFERENCES

1. Quotation about Breastfeeding. Available at: <http://www.quotegarden.com/breastfeeding.html>. Accessed on 15 April 2019.
2. Global strategy for infant and young child feeding. Available at: <https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/>. Accessed on 20 January 2022.
3. Hamosh M. Bioactive factors in human milk. *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 2001;48(1):69-86.
4. Jones G, Steketee R, Bhutta Z, Morris S. The Bellagio child survival study group, How many child deaths can we prevent this year. *Lancet.* 2003;362(9377):65-71.
5. Agampodi SB, Agampodi TC, Piyaseeli UK. Breastfeeding practices in a public health field practice area in Sri Lanka: A survival analysis. *Int Breastfeed J.* 2007;2:13.
6. Zhou Q, Younger KM, Kearney JM. An exploration of the knowledge and attitudes towards breastfeeding among a sample of Chinese mothers in Ireland. *BMC Public Health.* 2010;10:722.
7. Chinnaasami B, Sundar S, Kumar J, Sadasivam K, Pasupathy S. Knowledge, attitude and practices of mothers regarding breastfeeding in a south Indian hospital. *Biomed Pharmacol J.* 2016;9:195-9.
8. Thomas S, Poornima S, Vinay M. Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of mothers regarding breastfeeding: A cross sectional study in selected rural area of Mandya District, Karnataka. *Natl J Res Community Med.* 2017;6:151-7.
9. Girish HO, Acharya A, Kumar A, Venugopalan PP, Sarada Prabhakaran RK. Knowledge and practices of breastfeeding among ante-natal mothers at a teaching hospital at Kannur, Kerala: A cross-sectional study. *J Evol Med Dent Sci.* 2013;2:8996-9001.
10. De M, Taraphdar P, Paul S. Awareness of breast feeding among mothers attending antenatal OPD of NRS medical college. *IOSR J Dent Med Sci.* 2016; 15:3-8.
11. Bashir A, Mansoor S, Naikoo MY. Knowledge, attitude, and practices of postnatal mothers. *Int J Contemp Pediatr.* 2019;6(5):2111.
12. Premlata M, Nupur H, Aditi B, Anuradha S, Priyanka M. Knowledge, attitude and practice of breast feeding at a tertiary care centre in Rajasthan. *Scho Acad J Biosci.* 2014;2:714-8.
13. Park K, Everett J. *Park's Textbook of Preventive and Social. Medicine.* India; Bhanot: 2015;530.
14. Kumar A, Unnikrishnan B, Rekha T, Mithra P, Kumar N, Kulkarni V, et al. Awareness and attitude regarding breastfeeding and immunization practices among primigravida attending a tertiary care hospital in Southern India. *J Clin Diagn Res.* 2015;9:LC01-5.

**Cite this article as:** Jyotsna A, Vijayalakshmi K, Shinde R. Awareness, knowledge about breast feeding practices among urban mothers. *Int J Reprod Contracept Obstet Gynecol* 2023;12: 437-40.