

**Original Article**

**BREAST FEEDING PRACTICES IN URBAN COMMUNITY OF SURAT CITY**  
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**ABSTRACT**

The breast feeding practices adopted in terms of duration, frequency and exclusiveness of breast feeding and weaning have great impact on complete physical, mental and psycho-social development of the child. The objective of conducting the study is to evaluate the breast feeding practices adopted by women in urban community, and to study factors affecting time of initiation of breast feeding, age of weaning, and food given to the baby other than breast milk. The current cross sectional study conducted among 200 women reveal that 70% of mothers were able to start breast feeding within first hour of life after normal delivery. Out of 26 complicated deliveries, 6 mothers were able to start breast feeding within 4 hours of life. The major reasons for delay in starting of breast feeding were uneasiness to mother and not having adequate breast milk. Exclusive breast feeding was practiced by 50% of the mothers for first six month of life. The common reason given by mother for not giving exclusive breast feeding were no knowledge of exclusive breast feeding (40%) and not having adequate breast milk(35%). This study emphasizes the need of breast feeding education programme regarding the duration of exclusive breast feeding and the age of weaning.

**Key words:** Breast feeding, exclusive breast feeding, weaning

**INTRODUCTION**

Breast feeding is rule rather than exception in most parts of India. During last two decades wealth of knowledge has accumulated to prove nutritional, anti infective, anti fertility, psycho social and economic advantages of breast feeding. It is now established that the breast feeding practices adopted in terms of duration, frequency and exclusiveness of breast feeding and weaning of child is essential for our understanding of impact of breast feeding on complete physical, mental and psycho-social development of the child.<sup>1, 2</sup> The change in infant feeding practices began in Industrialized countries, and soon followed by educated female of underdeveloped countries by curtailing the duration of breast feeding. This practice is copied by uneducated counterpart of the urban and rural areas of underdeveloped countries.<sup>2</sup> Exclusive breast feeding for first 6 months is most appropriate infant feeding practice.<sup>3</sup> An early introduction of breast milk substitute and late introduction of complementary food leads to development of malnutrition in age group of 6-24 years child.<sup>4</sup> The Primary objective of conducting the study is to evaluate the breast feeding practices adopted by women in urban community, and secondary objective is to study factors affecting time of initiation of breast feeding, age of weaning, and food given to the baby other than breast milk.

This was a cross sectional study conducted in various Aanganwadis of Varachha UHTC of Surat city. Women attending the Aanganwadi on Mamta Day having at least one child less than 2 years of age were interviewed using pre tested semi structured questionnaire. All the mothers were interviewed regarding breast feeding practices for their youngest child. Verbal consent of women was taken for participation in the study. The women who did not give consent and the women not having child less than 2 years were excluded from the study.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, 200 women of urban area Surat city were interviewed regarding their breast feeding practices. Among these, 57% of mothers were in the age group of 20-25 years, while 36% of mothers were in the age group of 25-30 years. Most of the mother were educated with 67% of mothers had education upto secondary level. 61.5% of mothers interviewed had only single child, whereas 32% of mothers had two children, 5.5% of mothers had three children and 1% of mothers had four children. Median age of mother for marriage was 21 years. All the mothers were interviewed regarding breast feeding practices for their youngest child. 110 (55%) mothers had last child of less than 6 months of age, while 53(26.5%) of mothers had last child between 6 to 12 months of age and remaining 18.5% of mothers

**MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY**

had last child between 1 to 2 years of age. Among these children 107 were male and 93 were female. Most of the deliveries(96.5%) were conducted at Hospital by Doctor, while only few (3.5%) deliveries were conducted at home. This is because of the urban locality of women, and

increase awareness of women for hospital delivery. Among 200 mothers, 174(87%) mothers had normal delivery, while 26(13%) mothers had faced some complication or undergo cesarean section due to some reason.

**Table 1:** Time of initiation of breast feeding (n=200)

Time (hrs)	Type of delivery		Place of delivery		Gender of child	
	Normal (n=174) (%)	Complicated (n=26) (%)	Hospital (n=193) (%)	Home (n=7) (%)	Male (n=106) (%)	Female (n=94) (%)
< 1	122 (70.1)	0 (0.0)	118 (61.1)	4 (57.1)	63 (59.4)	59 (62.8)
1 – 2	27 (15.5)	4 (15.4)	30 (15.5)	1 (14.3)	15 (14.1)	16 (17.0)
2 – 4	0 (0.0)	2 (7.7)	2 (1.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.9)	1 (1.1)
4 – 6	6 (3.4)	4 (15.4)	10 (5.2)	0 (0.0)	6 (5.7)	4 (4.2)
6 – 24	0 (0.0)	3 (11.5)	3 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.9)	2 (2.1)
>24	19 (10.9)	13 (50.0)	30 (15.5)	2 (28.6)	20 (18.9)	12 (12.8)
Total	174 (87.0)	26 (13.0)	193 (97.5)	7 (3.5)	106 (53.0)	94 (47.0)

Breast feeding should be initiated as soon as possible after normal delivery of the baby and within 4 hours after birth of the baby, if delivery is taken place by cesarean section. In our study, 122(70%) of mothers were able to start breast feeding within first hour of life after normal delivery. Out of 26 complicated deliveries, 6 mothers were able to start breast feeding within 4 hours of life. These figures are higher compare to 61.3% of mothers initiated breast feeding in first 6 hours of life reported in study done at Navi Mumbai<sup>5</sup>. Hospital is the place where mothers can be encourage to start early breast feeding. In our study, out of 193 mothers who delivered a baby in hospital 118 mothers were able to start breast feeding within first hour of life. There was no significant difference found regarding initiation of breast feeding for male and female child. The reason given by mothers for delay in starting of breast feeding were uneasiness to mother, either family member or doctor not allow, not having adequate breast milk and cesarean section, while 44 mothers were not able to answer the reason for delay in initiation of breast feeding.

Breast feeding should be done on demand of the baby. Mother should breastfeed her at least 6-8 times in 24 hours. In present study, 185(92.5%) mothers breastfed their baby more than 6 times a day. For male child, 36.8% of male child were breast fed 6-8 times a day, while 53.8% of male child were breast fed more than 8 times a day. In case of female child, 61.7% of female child were breast fed 6-8 times a day, while 33% of female child were breast fed more than 8 times a day. It can be seen that, frequency of breast feeding for male child is slightly higher compare to the female child.

**Table 2:** Frequency of breast feeding & gender of the child

Frequency of breast feeding	Gender of the child		
	Male (n=106) (%)	Female (n=94) (%)	Total (n=200) (%)
≤4	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)
>4 – 6	9(8.5)	5(5.3)	14(7.0)
>6 – 8	39(36.8)	58(61.7)	97(48.5)
>8	57(53.8)	31(33.0)	88(44.0)

WHO recommends exclusive breast feeding up to the 6 months of age<sup>6</sup>. In our study exclusive breast feeding was practiced by 91% of the mothers for first four month of life, which is higher compare to 74% of exclusive breast feeding reported by A.K. Gupta et al in his study<sup>7</sup>. This figure is quite lower (50.5%) if we seen exclusive breast feeding up to 6 months of age, which is comparable to 57.1% reported by Sinhababu et al in his study.<sup>8</sup> Among mothers not giving exclusive breast feeding, most common food given to the baby other than breast milk in first 6 months of life was water(50%) and cow milk(30%). Other food which buffalo milk, goat milk, milk powder and mashed potato. The most common reason given by mother for not giving exclusive breast feeding were no knowledge of exclusive breast feeding (40%) and not having adequate breast milk (35%). Other reasons for non exclusive breast feeding were family member insist and complication in the post partum period, cesarean section delivery.

The gradual introduction of solid foods, known as the 'weaning process' (or complementary feeding), is essential to provide for the increasing

nutritional requirements during an infant's first year. The WHO<sup>6</sup> recommends introduction of solids at 6 months along with continued breast feeding.

**Table 3:** Weaning age of the child

Age of weaning (month)	Gender of the child		
	Male (n=60) (%)	Female (n=42) (%)	Total (n=102) (%)
<=4	2(3.3)	3(7.1)	5(4.9)
4-6	46(76.7)	35(83.3)	81(79.4)
6-8	10(16.7)	3(7.1)	13(12.7)
>8	2(3.3)	1(2.4)	3(2.9)

In the present study, out of 200 children, 98(49%) were not started weaning. Among remaining 102 children, weaning was done between 4-6 months of age in 79.4% of children, while 12.7% of children were wean at age of 6-8 months, 2.9% at age more than 8 months and 4.9% at age less than 4 months. Dr. J. M. Kearney has reported median age of weaning was 4 months in his study<sup>9</sup>, while in our study the median age of wean was 6 months, which is comparable to WHO recommendation. No significant difference is found in age of weaning regarding to the gender of the child.

### CONCLUSION

This study reveals the high preference of women for delivery of their baby in the hospital in this urban locality, and majority of women started breast feeding within first hour of life, which is a good practice. Also the frequency of breast feeding is quite adequate. Only half of the women had done exclusive breast feeding for 6 months of age. Nearly 80% of women started weaning of their child at 4-6 month of age. So, this study emphasizes the need of breast feeding education

programme regarding the duration of exclusive breast feeding and the age of weaning.

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