



GIVE YOUR BABY THE BEST START IN LIFE

1. *Should I breastfeed my baby?*

Yes, every mother should breastfeed her baby. Breast milk is nature's first gift to your baby, and there is no other substitute for it. For the first 4 to 6 months, breast milk is your baby's best and complete food. Do not be misled by people who suggest powdered milk 'in case you think you do not have enough milk'. It has been found that almost all mothers are capable of producing more than enough milk for their baby's need.

Nature in all its wisdom has ensured that *you can* breastfeed successfully. All you need is the *determination* to breastfeed, and *faith* in your own ability to breastfeed successfully. Remember that breast milk has many qualities which make it unique from all other artificial milks available.

2. *Will I be able to breastfeed successfully?*

A common reason mothers give for stopping breastfeeding is the fear that they do not have enough milk, and so they introduce their babies to artificial feeds in the first few days after birth.

Research shows that in practice, almost every mother *can* breastfeed successfully. Rarely is there any physical reason for being unable to feed the baby naturally. The most important thing to remember is that the mother must *want* to breastfeed, have confidence in her ability to breastfeed successfully and must not lose hope.

Further, studies have shown that women who want to breastfeed actually produce more milk than those who don't want to, or are indifferent about

breastfeeding their babies. Many women fail to breastfeed successfully, even though they want to, because they believe, incorrectly, that they do not have enough milk for their baby's need. The truth is that almost all mothers are capable of producing more than enough milk for their baby's need.

3. *What is colostrum? Is it important for my baby?*

For the first day or two, the milk that flows from the breast is called colostrum. This first milk is extremely nourishing for the newborn. What makes colostrum even more special is the fact that this first milk is full of antibodies produced by the mother. These antibodies protect the newborn against some diseases and infections at a time when the baby is particularly vulnerable. Later milk also contains these antibodies, but not as much as the first milk. In addition, colostrum also has certain properties that prevent allergic diseases like asthma and eczema which are more common in bottlefed babies.

Traditionally, in many Indian homes, colostrum is thrown away. Today we have learnt that in actual fact, colostrum is extremely valuable to the newborn. Throwing away the colostrum deprives the newborn of the best possible nourishment available, as well as the protection that it offers against disease. Colostrum is very rich in proteins, minerals and vitamins. In fact, colostrum is just what the newborn needs soon after its birth.

No matter where a mother delivers her baby, at home, hospital or the nursing home, she should

insist that the baby is kept with her in the same room. This way she can ensure that her baby gets the benefits of colostrum. Put the baby to the breast soon after birth. The sooner the baby starts suckling the breast, the sooner and better the milk will flow. In addition, it will receive the benefits of colostrum which flows only for the first day or two. According to many doctors, colostrum has life-long health preserving benefits.

4. *How often should a baby be breastfed in a day?*

Babies usually cry when they are hungry. Put your baby to the breast each time it cries for a feed. This demand feeding is a better way to feed your baby instead of fixed schedules.

Babies could also cry for some other reasons, such as if their nappy is wet or if the clothes are too tight. Having checked that none of these is the source of trouble, you should interpret the baby's cry as its demand to be breastfed.

Your baby is a special person, an individual unlike other babies. It is not just a hungry stomach to be filled at regular intervals. Once you accept that the baby may ask for a feed at different times, depending on when it is hungry, you are well on your way towards breastfeeding successfully. If you worry each time it cries for a feed too soon, you are more likely to lose your milk. This happens because worry can interfere with the 'let down' of the milk from your breasts.

While some babies settle down to a routine of demand feeding after a few weeks, others don't. So do not compare your baby with other babies. Just breastfeed your baby when it cries for a feed.

As the baby grows it may ask for fewer feeds and may settle down to a regular demand routine, every two, three or four hours. Sometimes your baby may demand a feed more often than other times. This could be for many reasons: the baby may be extra hungry, growing rapidly, teething or is just upset. If the baby needs extra feeds, your own milk supply will adjust to its needs if you let the baby suckle as much as it wants to and whenever it demands a feed.

5. *How long should each breastfeed last?*

Let your baby tell you how long it needs to suckle

your breasts to get its fill. A hungry baby will cry for milk. The old rule of 10 minutes on each breast was created because that was roughly the average time that a baby takes to feed. But each baby is different. So while some babies take less than 10 minutes to a side to get their fill, others may take longer.

During the first few months, you may find that your baby wants a feed very frequently. This is not unusual and is the baby's way of increasing your milk supply to suit its growing needs. People may tell you that a baby gets all the milk that it needs in the first few minutes at each breast. But all babies are not alike. A lot will depend on how vigorously the baby suckles, the strength of your 'let down' reflex and the time taken for the 'let down' or start of the milk flow.

Remember that some babies enjoy sucking even if they have had their fill. There is no reason to stop this unless you have some other work to do, or if you have sore nipples. This 'comfort suckling' is considered by many experts to be an important factor in the child's emotional development.

When your baby has had its fill on one breast, in other words, when it loses interest in feeding, change it to the other side. Let the baby continue feeding on the other breast as long as it wants to. There are times when the baby will feel less hungry, is sleepy or just tired and may not want to suckle very long. Don't worry about this, and don't force the baby to feed. Just offer your breast after a little while.

6. *How does a mother know if her baby is getting enough milk?*

It is true that when you breastfeed you cannot actually see how much milk the baby drinks. However, if your baby sleeps well, is healthy, active and playful when awake and gains weight steadily each month, then you can be sure that your baby is getting enough milk for its nourishment and growth.

7. *How can I increase the flow of milk in my breasts?*

The baby's suckling is the best way to start and increase the flow of milk in your breasts, and the sooner the baby is put to the breast, the sooner and better will be the flow of milk. Let the baby suckle as

frequently as possible because the more often a baby suckles the breast, the better it stimulates the breast to produce more milk. This is Nature's secret to start and increase the flow of milk to meet your baby's growing needs.

Sometimes emotions like embarrassment, tension, or fatigue can also interfere with the 'let down' of the milk. A mother should therefore, relax and sit comfortably when she feeds her baby.

When the baby suckles, it stimulates two hormones which are released into the mother's bloodstream. One of these hormones stimulates a strong flow of blood through the breasts and activates the milk making tissue. The other hormone causes the breasts to push out or 'let down' the milk from the breasts. This is generally felt as a 'pins and needles' sensation or a full feeling in the breasts. If the milk doesn't 'let down', your baby will not get all the milk that is available in the breasts. Fortunately Nature has ensured that when the baby suckles frequently, the 'let down' reflex works well.

8. *What should I eat to increase the flow of milk in my breasts? Are there medicines to increase this flow?*

There are no special foods or medicines to improve the quality and quantity of breast milk. To breast-feed successfully and to maintain her own health, a nursing mother should eat slightly more of the food she normally eats. There is no need to eat anything special. An extra helping of rice or chapati, dal, green leafy vegetables and fresh fruits will give the nursing mother all the nourishment she needs to produce enough milk for her baby and to maintain her own health. Eggs, fish and meat are also good. What is important is to eat slightly more of everything that she normally eats, rather than eating anything special while nursing her baby.

Finally be assured, *you can* increase your milk supply. Nature has made sure that when the baby suckles the breast frequently, the milk will flow well. All you need is the confidence in your natural ability to breastfeed successfully. Eat and rest well.

These early months can be a challenge, demanding much patience and determination on your part. So do relax and enjoy your baby. Remember that not only is your baby receiving the best food available,

but also both your baby and you are building a happy and secure relationship during this period.

9. *How should a mother hold the baby while breastfeeding?*

There is no ideal position to hold the baby while breastfeeding. The main thing is to make yourself comfortable because you will be in that position for some time, and try to make the baby comfortable. Pain and discomfort can reduce the 'let down' of milk.

Support the baby's weight with a pillow on your lap. Another pillow under the arm supporting the baby will also help. If you are sitting, it is easier to feed if you sit upright and lean slightly forward. Hold the baby with its chest and stomach against you, so that it doesn't have to turn its head around and can feed comfortably. Some babies like to have something to hold on to while feeding—give the baby your finger to hold onto. At night, lie on your side and breastfeed the baby.

Don't push the baby's mouth onto your nipple. This could frighten the baby. Instead, stroke the side of its mouth with your nipple. If your breast is very full, you may have to hold it back so that the baby's nose is not smothered. But don't bother to hold your nipple or breast once the baby starts suckling. Expressing a little milk from a full breast will soften it enough to enable the baby to hold on.

When breastfeeding, part of the areola (the dark area around the nipple) should go into the baby's mouth as the milk reservoirs are under the areola and need to be emptied by the baby's suckling. If only the nipple goes into the baby's mouth, not enough milk will flow out. The baby would have to suckle extra hard and this could lead to sore nipples. If you have an extra large areola, hold it between the finger and thumb and squeeze them together. This will make the areola flatter and easier for the baby to take in its mouth.

You may notice that at times your baby stops suckling and looks around. This happens because the 'let down' causes the milk to be spurted in an uneven flow. Several spurts of milk come out, and then there is a short pause before the milk flows again. Your baby is adapting to the flow of your milk and its breathing pattern is also altered to fit in with this drinking pattern.

10. How should a mother stop a feed?

Some babies simply let the nipple go when they have had enough to drink, while others have to be gently removed from the breast. Some babies also like to suckle even after they have had their fill. This is called 'comfort suckling.' According to many doctors, this should be encouraged because it helps the emotional development of the baby.

Do not abruptly pull the baby's mouth away from your breast while it is feeding. The force could damage the nipple and the areola, apart from frightening the baby. Instead, put the tip of your little finger in the corner of the baby's mouth and gently draw the baby away.

11. How can I tell when the baby has had enough milk?

Babies often show they have had enough milk simply by falling asleep. But before they go to sleep, they may unclench their fists, smile, refuse to drink anymore or just arch their back. Don't force the baby to feed any more if it doesn't want to. Learn to accept your baby's judgement about when and how much it wants to feed.

12. Can a woman with small breasts produce enough milk?

Some women with small breasts worry about their capacity to produce enough milk for their baby's need. The size of the breasts have no relation to their capacity to produce milk. Women with small breasts *can* and *do* produce more than enough milk for their babies. Worry will only reduce the flow of milk. What is important is not the size of your breasts, but allowing your baby to suckle frequently. Frequent suckling will stimulate your breasts to produce more milk. This is the secret to successful breastfeeding.

13. Can a mother breastfeed while having her periods?

There is no reason why a mother should not breastfeed during her periods, since this will not harm her or the baby. Some mothers say that their babies are temperamental when they have their periods. This is quite likely due to the mother's own menstrual tension being communicated to the baby. There is no difference in the mother's milk,

during her periods.

14. Can a mother breastfeed even when she is ill?

Yes, a mother can continue breastfeeding her baby even while she is ill, without harming the baby. In most cases, the baby will get the protection against the mother's illness from the antibodies present in breast milk.

Most medicines taken for illnesses do pass into the breast milk but in such small quantities, that they are unlikely to harm your baby. Consult a doctor who will prescribe medicines which are less likely to harm the baby. The doctor will also advise the mother to continue breastfeeding.

However if the mother has high temperature, jaundice or septicaemia, the doctor will advise her to discontinue breastfeeding until she recovers. A mother who has been advised to stop breastfeeding during an illness should however, express her milk regularly and throw it away until she has fully recovered from the illness. This practice will ensure that her flow of milk is not reduced. On recovery she should resume breastfeeding the baby.

During the period when she has been advised to discontinue breastfeeding, the mother can give the baby fresh cow, goat or buffalo milk or even milk from the local dairy centre. Do not dilute this milk.

Generally speaking in most common illnesses, a mother can continue breastfeeding without any ill effects on the baby.

15. Should a baby be breastfed even when ill?

Yes, your baby can certainly be breastfed even when it is ill. In fact it is very important that you continue breastfeeding while the baby is ill because your milk will provide the baby with antibodies to protect it from other illnesses which can set in when it is already weak. Breast milk will also give the baby the nourishment and strength to recover from the illness.

Do not stop breastfeeding when the baby is ill, unless your doctor advises you to stop. But this is rare. Unless your baby is so ill that it is not allowed milk, the baby will do better drinking breast milk than any other milk. Breast milk is much easier for

the baby to digest. Besides, the baby will recover faster from vomiting, diarrhoea and dysentery if it is given breast milk.

16. Can a mother breastfeed when she is pregnant?

Yes, a mother can certainly continue to breastfeed her baby all through her pregnancy without any ill effects on either the breastfed baby, the baby in the womb or herself. However, a pregnant woman who is breastfeeding her earlier child should eat slightly more for the sake of the breastfed baby and herself as well as for the baby growing in her womb. All three require good nourishment during this period.

17. Is it possible that breastmilk may not suit my baby?

Babies are rarely allergic to breast milk. Nothing could be more suitable than what Nature intended to feed your baby. In fact animal milk and powder milk are unnatural for the baby's system. It has been found that bottle fed babies are more likely to suffer from allergies like asthma and eczema. Bottle fed babies are also more prone to diarrhoea. Do breastfeed your baby. Breast milk is the safest and most nourishing food available for your baby.

18. What should a mother do about breastfeeding if she has had a caesarian operation?

Except in rare cases, there is no reason why a woman who has had a caesarian operation cannot breastfeed as successfully as the woman who has had a normal delivery. However, after a caesarian operation you are bound to be in pain. If you are determined to breastfeed, then you would have to put your pain and discomfort aside and insist that your baby be brought to you as soon as you are awake. As a bonus, breastfeeding your baby will help to compensate for some of the disappointment you may feel not having experienced a normal childbirth.

Unlike a mother who has had a normal delivery, you will not be able to breastfeed immediately after childbirth as you will be under the effect of general anaesthesia. However, *insist* that your baby be brought to you as soon as you are awake and

kept with you. Also you should insist that you do not want your baby to be bottle fed. Put the baby to the breast whenever it cries for a feed, instead of feeding it at fixed schedules. It is vital that you put the baby to the breast as soon as you are awake, so that your baby is not deprived colostrum. Frequent suckling will stimulate your breasts to produce more milk. In a day or so, your milk supply will settle down to suit your baby's need.

At first you may face a problem deciding on a comfortable position to breastfeed. Sitting up after a caesarian operation can be painful. However, don't let this problem put you off breastfeeding. Lie on your side and let the baby suckle your breasts. After the baby has had its fill on one side, ask someone to help you turn to the other side and continue breastfeeding from the other breast.

Remember breast milk is the best and complete food for your baby, besides being the safest and most hygienic. For your baby's sake, put your pain and discomfort aside and insist on breastfeeding your baby as soon as you are awake. Do not let people discourage you from breastfeeding. After all, as a mother, you would not like to deprive your newborn of the best food available.

19. Should a baby be kept with the mother while she is still in the hospital or nursing home?

Every mother should insist that her newborn is kept with her in the same room, no matter where she is—at home, hospital or the nursing home. This is called 'rooming in'.

Many hospitals and nursing homes keep the newborn separately for the first few days. Although a nurse will bring the baby to the mother in the course of the day, she may give the baby an occasional 'top' or bottle feed. Even a single bottle feed of milk powder can disrupt the formation of the normal suckling habit and reduce the mother's milk supply.

This happens because suckling the mother's nipple requires greater effort on the baby's part. Nature intended it to be this way. This extra effort by the baby helps to stimulate the breasts to start and increase the flow of milk. On the other hand, suckling the feeding bottle is much easier. If your baby gets used to suckling from a feeding bottle, it

will not exert much pressure while suckling your breast. If the baby doesn't suckle hard enough, it will not stimulate the breasts enough to produce more milk. This can reduce the flow of milk from your breasts. Therefore it is vital that every mother insists that her baby is kept with her soon after birth and is exclusively breastfed. Not only would the baby get colostrum that flows for the first day or two, but frequent suckling whenever the baby cries for a feed will ensure a good flow of milk.

20. How can a working mother continue breastfeeding after she returns to work?

Most working mothers are entitled to three months maternity leave. A mother who is keen to breastfeed her baby should take as much of this leave after delivery. This will ensure that at least for the first three months of life, her baby is exclusively breastfed while she is at home. During this period, do not make the mistake of getting your baby used to bottle feeds before you return to work. Just because you have to return to work, does not mean that bottle feeding is the only answer to feeding your baby.

The problem of breastfeeding arises during the working hours when the mother is away at work. However, if she is determined to breastfeed, she can hand express her breasts in the morning before leaving for work. Store this expressed milk in a clean covered container which has already been properly sterilized in boiling water. This precaution would ensure that no germs enter the baby's body. Breast milk can be stored in the refrigerator for a few hours, and reused while the mother is away. Do not warm expressed milk directly over the fire. To warm this milk put the container in a bowl of hot water. A family member who stays at home with the baby can give the feed, using a clean spoon.

Once the mother returns home, she can breastfeed her baby. A working mother who wishes to breastfeed should follow this practice: breastfeed the baby before leaving for work; hand express your milk and store this milk which can be reused in your absence, and resume breastfeeding when you return. This will ensure that your baby is not deprived of your milk during these crucial months of life. Expressing your milk everyday before leaving for work acts as a double bonus. Besides

providing the baby with the best nourishment available, it also prevents your milk flow from reducing.

Some mothers may complain that expressing breast milk every morning would involve much time and effort, just when she has so many other household chores to finish. But if you balance the benefits of continuing breastfeeding with this extra effort and time, you will be convinced to make the right decision—to continue breastfeeding. You will also have the satisfaction that your baby is getting the best possible nourishment. After all, breast milk is the best and complete food for the baby during the first 4 to 6 months of life. Remember, there can be no other substitute for it.

21. How do I express milk from my breast?

Wash your hands before you express the milk. Use both hands to squeeze gently from the base of the breast towards the areola (the dark area around the nipple) and the nipple. Then squeeze the breast and the areola between the fingers and the thumb till the milk flows out.

Collect this milk in a clean cup or container which has been boiled previously. Cover the container and store the milk in the refrigerator. Expressed milk can be stored in the refrigerator and reused within a few hours. If there is no refrigerator in your home, store the expressed milk in a cool place. Milk which is kept outside a refrigerator must be used within 2 to 3 hours after being expressed.

To warm the milk, put the container in a bowl of hot water. Do not warm expressed milk directly over the fire. Use a clean spoon to feed the baby.

22. What should every nursing mother know about cleanliness and care of her nipples and breasts?

Every morning while having a bath, wash your nipples and breasts with plain water. Avoid using soap on your breasts and nipples as this would remove the natural oils secreted by your breasts to keep them from cracking. While you do not have to wash your breasts and nipples before a feed, do remember to wash them after and dry them well. This precaution will prevent your nipples from cracking. Cracked or sore nipples can be painful. The important thing to remember is to wash your

breasts and nipples with water and keep them dry between feeds.

23. *What should a nursing mother eat to maintain a good flow of milk?*

There is no evidence that any food, drink or vitamins will increase or decrease the flow of milk, as long as you eat enough of a variety of foods. However to produce enough milk for the baby and to maintain your own health, you should eat a little extra of whatever you eat normally. An extra helping of rice or chapati, dal, fresh green leafy vegetables, fish, eggs, meat and fresh fruits will give you all the nourishment that you need to produce more than enough milk for your baby and will help you maintain your own health.

It is sensible to eat according to your appetite and try not to lose weight—the fat stored in your body during pregnancy will slowly be lost when you breastfeed. Avoid overeating. A mother who eats sensibly will not only provide her baby with plenty of milk, but will also ensure that her own body isn't being drained of food resources to meet her baby's need.

Even poorly nourished mothers manage to breastfeed their babies adequately for the first 4 to 6 months before extra food is required for the normal growth and development of the baby. However, these mothers breastfeed at the cost of their own bodies—their bodies lose calcium and proteins. The more babies these women bear and feed, the poorer their health becomes.

How much extra should you eat while nursing? You should eat slightly more than you do when you are not pregnant. Is there anything you should eat more of when feeding the baby? No. Assuming that you are eating a variety of food in your normal daily diet, just eat slightly more of everything. This will provide enough nourishment both for your baby and you.

24. *Is it true that vegetarian mothers cannot produce enough milk and so should not breastfeed?*

No, this is not true. A vegetarian mother can breastfeed successfully and produce enough milk for her baby. Traditionally in most Indian homes people eat a vegetarian diet, and women through

the ages have lived and reared their children while eating a vegetarian diet. As long as the nursing mother eats slightly more than what she eats normally when she is not pregnant, she will produce more than enough milk for her baby. There is absolutely no reason to fear that a woman eating a vegetarian diet will deprive her baby of adequate nourishment. A vegetarian diet which contains a variety of foods like rice or chapati, dal, fresh green leafy vegetables, 'paneer', curd and fresh fruits will provide enough nourishment both to produce enough milk and to maintain the mother's own health.

25. *Should a nursing mother drink extra water so that her milk is not too thick and is easy for the baby to digest?*

The amount of water that a mother drinks has no relation to the consistency of breast milk, which differs from person to person. Some mothers fear that their milk is too watery, while others feel their milk is too thick for the baby to digest. The truth is that the consistency of breast milk has nothing to do with its quality. Breast milk, whether thin or thick is perfect for your baby.

In summer, a nursing mother finds herself very thirsty. This is hardly surprising, considering that the baby is taking a great deal of milk from you everyday. Don't force yourself to drink extra water, just drink as much as you want to.

26. *Will breastfeeding spoil my figure?*

No, breastfeeding will not spoil your figure. On the contrary, breastfeeding is Nature's way of restoring your figure. During pregnancy a woman's body stores up fat in preparation for nursing the baby. This extra fat is used up when the mother starts breastfeeding. In fact, breastfeeding helps the mother lose the extra weight she gains during pregnancy. In addition, the womb which has stretched to hold the growing baby, also regains its normal size when a hormone is released during breastfeeding.

27. *Is breastfeeding effective in delaying the next pregnancy?*

It has been found that frequent and regular breastfeeding may help to delay the next pregnancy. Breastfeeding alone, however, will not provide

complete protection. A mother who breastfeeds should also take some other precaution to avoid pregnancy.

28. *When should a breastfed baby start eating soft foods? What should it eat and how do I start my baby on these foods?*

For the first 4 to 6 months, breast milk is your baby's best and complete nourishment. After this, its growing body needs additional nourishment. You don't need to buy special foods for your baby. You can prepare them at home inexpensively from the same things you use for the family meal. However, your baby still needs breast milk in addition to its new diet, so continue breastfeeding as long as you can.

After the first 4 to 6 months, your baby must also get a share of the family foods. Give the baby one type of food at a time until it learns to enjoy a variety of foods. Start with small quantities and gradually increase them to suit its age and appetite. Feed the baby frequently.

Your baby will grow well on foods like kichari, dalia, dal mixed with rice or chapati, lightly cooked fresh green leafy vegetables, half boiled eggs and fish. Fresh fruits like papaya and banana along with fresh orange, musami or lime juice are also good for the growing baby.

Mash the food well to make it easy for the baby to swallow and digest. Add a little ghee, butter or oil. This makes the food tastier and gives extra energy.

Soft foods should be given between breastfeeds. Encourage the baby to feed itself with its fingers. This is part of its growing and learning experience. By one year, your baby is ready to eat the food you prepare for the rest of the family.

29. *Should a breastfed baby also be given extra vitamins and juices? At what age should these be given?*

As long as the nursing mother is healthy and eats enough of a variety of foods, there is no need to give extra vitamins and juices to a breastfed baby for the first 4 to 6 months of life. Breast milk will give the baby all that it needs during this period.

Once the baby is 4 to 6 months old, its growing

body needs additional nourishment. Your baby is now ready to eat soft foods. You can also give the baby fresh orange, musami or lime juice.

30. *What precautions should I take when preparing a meal or feeding my baby?*

Most mothers know the importance of hygiene. But often a busy mother may overlook some details of cleanliness. Can any mother afford to take this risk? The hidden dangers—germs that you cannot see—can lead to illnesses in the family. A baby is more likely to fall ill. You need to be extra careful if there is a baby at home.

Keep your home and surroundings clean. Germs breed in dirt and contaminated food and water, causing diarrhoea, and spreading diseases like cholera, dysentery and gastroenteritis. Drinking water must be strained through a clean cloth, boiled and cooled. Store this water in a clean covered container. Give your baby food which is freshly prepared. Wash your hands before you cook the meal or feed the baby. Keep utensils clean. Wash them well before and after use, and rinse under running water.

31. *Are special baby foods available in the market better than soft foods prepared at home?*

Special foods for babies available in the market are based on a mixture of powdered milk with some carbohydrates like wheat and rice. These foods which are cereal and milk based are expensive. On the other hand, a wise mother can provide her growing baby with all the nourishment it needs with the same things she uses to make the family meal. Instead of spending large sums of money on tins of baby foods, she can buy good wholesome food for the entire family, including the baby. Soft foods prepared at home give the baby a better variety of foods, in addition to providing all the nourishment it needs.

32. *Should I give soft foods before or after a breastfeed?*

Soft foods should be given between breastfeeds, preferably a couple of hours after a breastfeed. This is advised because a baby will not make an extra

effort to eat soft foods when it is very hungry. This is because suckling the mother's breast comes *naturally* to a baby, whereas it has to *learn* to eat soft foods. A hungry baby will be less interested in eating soft foods on an empty stomach. Having had a breast-feed a couple of hours earlier, the baby will not be too hungry when offered soft food and may show more interest in this food than otherwise.

On the other hand, if you offer the breast immediately after it has been fed soft food, the baby will not suckle the mother's breast strongly since it is not hungry at that moment. When the baby fails to suckle strongly, it will not stimulate the breasts to produce more milk. Eventually the flow of milk may reduce. Therefore, breastfeed your baby and offer it soft foods a couple of hours later. Give the next breastfeed a couple of hours after its last meal of soft foods. In this manner the baby will continue to get the double benefits of its mother's milk as well as soft foods.

33. Should a mother continue soft foods when the baby is ill?

It is incorrect to stop feeding a baby when it is ill. In fact the baby needs nourishment even more so to recover from its illness. Food will give it the strength to fight other illnesses which can set in when the body is already weak.

Soft foods like kichari, dalia, rice or chapati mixed with lightly cooked dal and vegetables will not harm the baby. Sometimes when the baby is ill, it does not feel hungry or may prefer to eat food other than what it normally eats. While recovering from its illness, the baby's appetite will improve. Give the baby slightly more than what it normally eats because it needs additional nourishment to regain its health.

34. Why does my baby have diarrhoea while teething? Is it because it is teething, or the fact that I have started giving it soft foods?

Often mothers tend to associate teething with diarrhoea. This is incorrect. Diarrhoea occurs when the baby eats contaminated food or drinks water which is contaminated. Moreover when a baby is teething, it tends to pick up things lying around the house and chew on it. These objects

can carry germs into its body and cause diarrhoea.

If you prepare soft foods hygienically, there is no reason why the baby should have diarrhoea. Introducing soft foods will not cause diarrhoea, as long as they are well prepared. Wash your hands before you make the meal or feed the baby. Use fresh food. Use clean drinking water. Keep the utensils clean. These precautions will help to prevent diarrhoea.

35. What is diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is not a single disease. It is a symptom that accompanies intestinal disorders. When a baby has diarrhoea, it passes frequent watery stools which may be foul smelling. Diarrhoea causes loss of vital body fluids and salts. In some cases, the stools may also have blood and mucus.

36. Is diarrhoea dangerous?

Yes, diarrhoea can be dangerous especially for babies and young children below two years. If you fail to replace the fluids and salts that a baby loses during diarrhoea, it can lead to a dangerous situation called 'dehydration'. Remember prolonged diarrhoea can lead to dehydration and even death. Do not take diarrhoea lightly. Unfortunately some mothers think diarrhoea is not serious. This is not true. Diarrhoea can become very serious if you neglect it.

37. Is it true that breastfed babies have less chance of getting diarrhoea?

Yes, it is true that babies who are breastfed exclusively rarely have diarrhoea. Breast milk is not only free of germs but also helps to prevent the growth of those germs that cause diarrhoea. It has been found that bottle fed babies have diarrhoea six times more often than breastfed babies. This is because the feed is not prepared hygienically. For a bottle feed to be safe, you need to take many precautions, like sterilizing the feeding bottle and nipple and boiling the water to make the feed.

Breastfeeding takes care of all this trouble. Breast milk is the safest and most hygienic way to feed your baby. Breastfeed as long as you can, even when the baby has diarrhoea. Breast milk will give the baby all the nourishment it needs to recover, besides being easier for the baby to digest. In

addition, antibodies in your milk will protect the baby from other illness which can set in when the baby is already weak from diarrhoea.

38. What should I do when my baby has diarrhoea?

There is a simple and inexpensive treatment that every parent can administer at home. Start the treatment at the first signs of diarrhoea.

In a glassful of boiled and cooled water, add a pinch of salt ($\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon). Make sure this solution is not saltier than your tears. Then add two teaspoons of sugar or 'gur' and dissolve it well. The baby may refuse to drink this solution, but insist on giving the solution frequently in small quantities.

It is important that the baby drinks a glassful of this solution every time it passes a watery stool. This is approximately the amount of liquid it loses every time it passes a watery stool. So make sure that you replace the fluids it has lost. Continue giving this solution until the baby stops passing watery stools. Plain water which is boiled and cooled, rice kanji or coconut water can also be given in addition to the salt and sugar solution. Remember to continue breastfeeding and normal feeding during diarrhoea. If the baby's condition doesn't improve within two days, contact your doctor immediately.

39. What is ORS?

ORS stands for oral rehydration salts. These salts are specially prepared to deal with the loss of vital salts from the body. Mixed with boiled and cooled water, this ORS solution becomes a good rehydration fluid. They come in packets and are available at a chemist. Follow the instructions on the packet to make the solution.

40. Should I give tonics or special foods when the baby has diarrhoea?

You don't have to give a tonic or any special kind of food when the baby has diarrhoea. Just make sure that it drinks plenty of liquids and eats well when it has diarrhoea. When the baby has diarrhoea, you need to replace the fluids it loses. It also needs good nourishment to regain its strength both to recover and to fight against other illnesses which can set in when it is already weak.

Give the home prepared salt and sugar solution or the ORS solution every time it passes a watery stool. Continue giving this solution until it passes normal stools. Some mothers simply stop feeding their babies during diarrhoea. This is not good for the baby for it needs nourishment. Give the baby lightly prepared foods like kichri, dalia or rice and curd.

41. What should I do to prevent my baby from getting diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is caused by germs which breed in contaminated food and water, dust and unsanitary surroundings. These germs enter the baby's body through contaminated food or water.

There are simple measures that you can take to prevent diarrhoea. Keep your home and surroundings clean. Drinking water must be strained through a clean cloth, then boiled and cooled. Store this water in a clean covered container. Keep your utensils clean. Wash them before and after use and rinse under running water. Give your baby freshly cooked food. Wash your hands before you cook the meal or feed the baby. All clothes including undergarments and bed linen must be clean and fresh. Finally continue to breastfeed your baby as long as you can, even when the baby has diarrhoea. Breast milk is the safest and most hygienic way to feed your baby.

42. Would a breastfed baby catch a cold if the mother drinks cold water?

No, this is not true. Breast milk comes at the right temperature to suit the baby, irrespective of the cold or hot drinks the mother consumes.

43. Since breast milk contains antibodies, does this mean that a breastfed baby does not require immunization against common childhood diseases?

Although antibodies present in the mother's milk do give immunities to some common childhood diseases, every baby should be immunized regularly to completely eliminate the risk of these diseases. Table 1 gives the immunization schedule. Remember that immunization is effective only when a regular and complete dose is given. The

baby should not be ill at the time of immunization. Breast milk contains mother's natural immunities to protect the baby against illness. Breastfeed your baby as long as you can. In addition follow the

immunization schedule to completely eliminate the risk of common childhood diseases like tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, poliomyelitis and measles.

TABLE 1 IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE

WHEN	WHAT	WHY
3-9 months	BCG vaccine	protect against tuberculosis
3-9 months	3 doses of DPT and Polio vaccine at intervals of 4-6 weeks each	protect against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus & poliomyelitis
9-12 months	Measles vaccine	protect against measles
1½-2 years	1st booster for DPT and Polio	
5-6 years	DT booster	protect against diphtheria & tetanus



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