

## Infant Feeding Practices and the Underlying Factors among Primipara Mothers



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### Abstract

Infants worldwide are fed breast milk exclusively, complementary food, or a combination of both. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to assess infant feeding practices and underlying factors among primipara mothers of a randomly selected 240 samples of primipara mothers at Hajo Block PHC, Assam. A semi structured questionnaire was prepared. The study showed that only 27% of mothers had adequate knowledge on breast feeding and 24% of mothers had adequate knowledge on complementary feeding. Breast feeding and formula feeding were practiced exclusively by 22.5% and 39% of primipara mothers respectively, while 38% of primipara mothers practiced mixed feeding. 38% of primipara mothers reported to have introduced complementary feeding to their babies within the age of 5-6 months. The study suggests that infant feeding practices are strongly influenced by factors like mother's age, education and employment. The study revealed that majority of the primipara mothers had inadequate knowledge and unsatisfactory practices on infant feeding.

**Key words:** Knowledge, practices, breast feeding, complementary feeding, socio cultural factors

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### Background

The first year of life is crucial in laying foundation of good health. Feeding periods are important to the infant because in addition to food they derive significant emotional and psychological benefits. Breast feeding should be given to the babies as soon as possible after birth. It helps in stimulating the production of breast milk which is baby's first immunization. The first milk or colostrum is most suitable for the baby because it contains high concentration of nutrients. **(K Park, 2009)<sup>1</sup>**

Optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding practices especially early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life help ensure young children the best possible start to life. Breastfeeding is nature's way of nurturing the child, creating a strong bond between the mother and the child. It provides development and learning opportunities to the infant, stimulating all five senses of the child sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. Breastfeeding fosters emotional security and affection,

with a lifelong impact on psychosocial development. Special fatty acids in breast milk lead to increased intelligence quotients (IQ) and better visual acuity. A breastfed baby is likely to have an IQ of around 8 points higher than a non-breastfed baby. **(National guideline of infant and young child feeding, 2006)<sup>2</sup>**

Recent scientific evidence reveals that nutrition has been responsible directly or indirectly for 50% of all deaths among children below five years annually. Over one third of these deaths are often associated with inappropriate feeding practices and occur during the first year of life. **(WHO, 2006)<sup>3</sup>**

### Need of the Study and Literature Review

Breastfeeding has been accepted as the most vital intervention for reducing infant mortality and ensuring optimal growth and development of children. **(IBFAN, 2007)<sup>4</sup>** This report provides information on the findings and action taken by countries over the past two years. It

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