

MORAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM REGARDING BREAST FEEDING

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To study the importance of breastfeeding in Islam.

Material and Methods: It was a cross-sectional study conducted on 100 infants from the rural and urban areas of Peshawar City from September 2015 to December 2015. Breastfeeding is nursing of the baby through milk from woman's breast. Islam has stressed upon breastfeeding by making it an obligation upon mothers. Modern medical science has also proved the benefits of breastfeeding and therefore UNICEF has launched a Baby friendly Initiative program to encourage the women of the society to breastfeed their newborns. The rationale of this study is to assess the importance of recommendation of breastfeeding in Islam. It was a cross-sectional study conducted on 100 infants from the rural and urban areas of Peshawar City from September 2015 to December 2015.

Results: Showed that 55 out of these 100 infants were breastfed and 45 were bottle fed. 38 out of these 45 bottle fed infants had a history of various infections and admission to the hospital in past. While only 10 out of 55 breastfed infants had a history of infection. 35 out of 45 bottle fed infants were underweight while only 15 out of 55 breastfed infants were underweight.

Conclusion: Breast feeding is important for normal growth and development of newborns and also help in preventing them from various infections and therefore Islam has encouraged breastfeeding and also made it an obligation upon women.

Key Words: Breastfeeding, weaning, bottle feeding, formula, milk.

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INTRODUCTION

"رضاعت" Word is Arabic in origin which means breast feeding. Good nutrition is necessary for the maintenance of healthy life. If a healthy person is deprived of all the essential nutrients he will not be able to perform his day to day activities and his health will also be badly affected. Therefore, for the proper growth and development of human body good nutrition is essential.

The basic necessity of life; food and water begin with the beginning of life and even when the baby is inside the womb of the mother they are provided with nutrition through placenta from maternal circulation and when the baby is born this channel of nutrition changes from that of intrauterine to extrauterine life i.e

proper feeding through mouth begins. Hence from the very beginning i.e from intrauterine life what we call as Aalam.e.jineen¹ there is arrangement of food for the developing fetus.

At this stage of life since the digestive and immune system of the babies are not developed properly they require a diet that is complete in all the essential nutrients and also suitable for their digestive system and also easily available to them. Therefore Allah has provided a natural source of food for the child in form of mother's milk.

Tafseer Ibne Kaseer writes that women are told to breast feed their newborns for two whole years. Breast-feeding beyond this time duration is meaningless in a way that there will be no foster relation if a woman feed someone after this².

Breast feeding is very clearly encouraged in Quran. Following are a few verses of the Holy Quran regarding breast feeding.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنَمِّ الرِّضَاعَةَ
 "And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years"³

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وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهَنَا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصْلُهُ فِي سِنَيْنِ أَنْ
اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ

"And we have stressed on man concerning his parents, his mother bore him undergoing upon weakness and his weaning takes two years"⁴

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا وَحَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا ۝

"And we commanded man to do good to his parents. His mother bore him with pain and gave birth to him with pain and his bearing and weaning are in thirty months."⁵

Therefore Islam strongly recommends breast feeding but recognizes that for various reasons parents may be unable or unwilling to complete the recommended two years. The decision about breast feeding and the time of weaning is expected to be a mutual decision by both parents in consideration to what is best for their family. Just as Allah says in the Quran:

فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا

"Then if the mother and father both try to wean by mutual consent and consultation, there is no sin on them."⁶

It is also acceptable in Islam for a child to be breast fed by foster mother if a woman herself due to some illness is not capable of breastfeeding her own child. Just as Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا اتَّيَمُّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

"And if you wish that your children should be suckled by nurses then too there is no blame on you, provided what was agreed to pay by you with kindness"⁷

In some cultures it has been customary for infants to be nursed by a foster mother. In ancient Arabia, it was common for city families to send their infants to a foster mother in desert where it was considered a healthier living environment.

Our Holy Prophet (PBUH) was breast fed by his mother for two to three days, then he was breast fed by a slave of Abu Lahab names Sobia and then by Bibi Haleema Saadia.

Before the birth of Prophet (PBUH) Bedouin nurses had arrived in Makkah from a tribe Hawarzan As it was a custom there in ancient Arab so women; the bedouin nurses used to visit the city twice a year. The time Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) was born Hazrat Haleema Saadia was also among the Bedouin nurses who had arrived in Makkah. Many of these women visited Hazrat Aminah house but were reluctant to

take her blessed child into their care as He was an orphan. Towards the end of the day every Bedouin lady had a child to bring up except Hazrat Haleema. She took Hazrat Aminah's child even though he was an orphan.

Thus instead of feeding them with formula milk which is not healthy at all for a newborn baby they must be handed over to nurses or foster mothers for feeding. Thus breast feeding is extremely important for the mental and physical development of a new born and the rationale of this study is to assess the importance of breastfeeding.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was conducted on a sample size of 100 infants from the rural and urban areas of Peshawar from September 2015 to December 2015. This was cross-sectional descriptive study and sampling technique was simple random sampling.

The inclusion criteria was children below 2 years of age and their mothers were interviewed regarding the feeding method they use and a detailed history regarding previous infections and hospital admissions of their child was taken. All data collected was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 17 and the results were presented in charts.

RESULTS

Results showed that in the sample of 100 infants, 55 were breast fed and 45 were bottle fed. Out of these 45 bottles fed infants 20 were fed by formula milk and 25 were fed by Cow's milk. Thirty-eight out of 45 bottle fed infants had a history of various infections like respiratory infections and gastrointestinal infections and also had a history of hospital admission while only 10 out of 55 breastfed infants had a history of various infections. 35 out of 45 bottle fed infants were underweight and their weight was below the standard for their age while only 15 out of 55 breastfed infants were underweight.

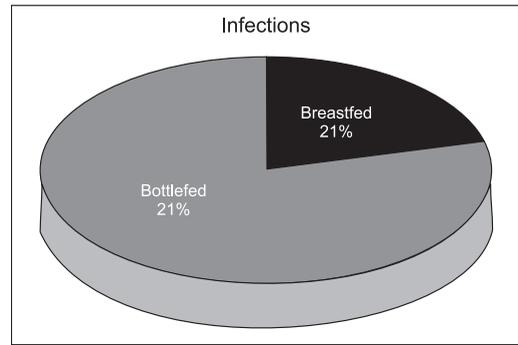
Table 1: Nutrient contents of various species milk

Nutrients	Human Milk	Cow Milk	Buffalo's Milk
Water	88	87.5	81
Energy Kcal	65	67	117
Proteins (g)	1.1	3.2	4.3
Carbohydrate (g)	7.4	4.4	5
Fat (g)	3.4	4.1	6.5
Calcium (mg)	28	120	210
Phosphorus (mg)	11	90	130
Lactalbumin	1:2	3:1	—

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Table 2: The nutrients contents of milk

Fat (g/100ml)	4.2
Cholesterol	0.016
Protein(g/100ml)	1.1
Casein (g/100ml)	0.4
a.lactalbumin (g/100ml)	0.3
Lactoferrin (g/100ml)	0.4
IgA	0.1
Carbohydrate (g/100ml) Lactose	7
Oligosaccharides	0.5
Minerals g/100ml Phosphorus	0.014
Calcium g/100ml	0.03



DISCUSSION

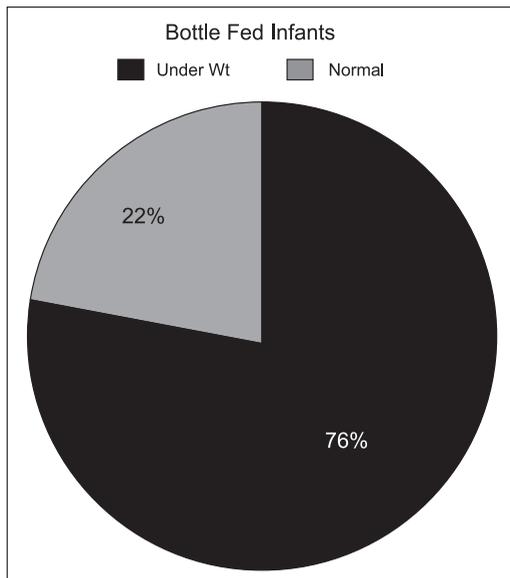
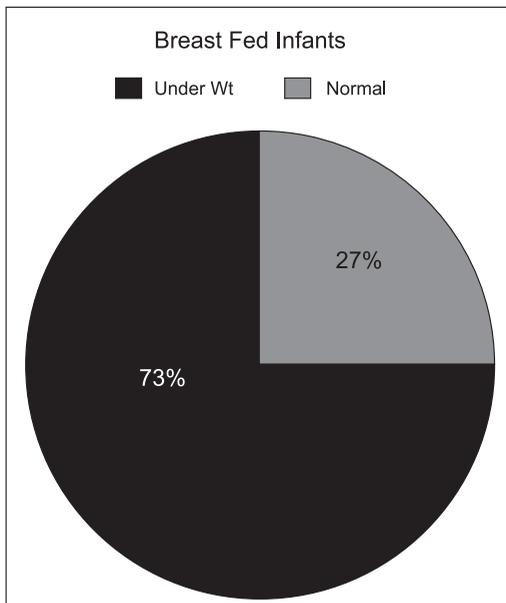
Balanced diet providing all the essential nutrients is important for proper growth and development of a growing child and thus Allah has provided breast milk for the nourishment of a new born baby. Islam has highly encouraged breast feeding and its benefits for both the mother and newborn baby have also been shown by modern researches in medical science. It is the basic right of every newborn baby to be breast fed by his mother as breast milk is easily available, inexpensive and also at optimal temperature suitable for the newborn and thus exclusive breast feeding at birth is recommended in Quran and hadees and modern science has proved its benefits.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE COMPOSITION OF HUMAN MILK AND MILK OBTAINED FROM OTHER ANIMAL SPECIES:

Values per 100gm

Mature human milk contains 3%-5% fat, 0.8%-0.9% protein, 6.9%-7.2% carbohydrate calculated as lactose, and 0.2% mineral constituents expressed as ash. Its energy content is 60-75 kcal/100 ml. Protein content is markedly higher and carbohydrate content lower in colostrum than in mature milk. Fat content does not vary consistently during lactation but exhibits large diurnal variations and increases during the course of each nursing. Race, age, parity, or diet do not greatly affect milk composition and there is no consistent compositional difference between milks from the two breasts unless one is infected. The principal proteins of human milk are casein homologous to bovine beta-casein, alpha-lactalbumin, lactoferrin, immunoglobulin IgA, lysozyme, and serum albumin. Many enzymes and several "minor" proteins also occur. The essential amino acid pattern of human milk closely resembles that found to be optimal for infants⁹. Latest new health benefits and discoveries in breastfeeding in the last few months:

Breastfeeding improves a child's chance of climbing the social ladder and having a successful adult life according to the study of medical journal archives of childhood diseases. Breastfeeding will make the brain of the child grow by 30% more and lead to better language and emotion.



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Breastfeeding reduces attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in children (Adhd) It lowers the risk of transmission of HIV from the mother to the child. Breastfeeding cuts the risk of mothers dying from cancers or heart attacks. Breastfeeding lowers the risk to the mother of having ovarian cancer by 2/3. Breastfeeding save the life of 830,000 lives annually(save the children)¹⁰

ADVANTAGES OF BREAST MILK OVER FORMULA MILK:

1. It has antibodies.
2. No bacteria
3. Correct temperature
4. No preservative
5. Build mother child bond.

DISADVANTAGES OF FORMULA MILK:

1. Causes illness like diarrhoea
2. Wrong mixture
3. Has preservatives and other chemicals
4. Is expensive.

Women who were formula-fed as infants have higher rates of breast cancer as adults. For both premenopausal and post menopausal breast cancer, women who were breastfed as children, even if only for a short time, had a 25% lower risk of developing breast cancer than women who were bottle-fed as infants.¹¹ For women in the U.S., the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) currently recommends:

Infants should be fed breast milk exclusively for the first 6 months of life. Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant does not receive any additional foods (except vitamin D) or fluids unless medically recommended.

BENEFITS FOR MOTHER:

1. Mothers who breast feed recover from child birth more quickly and easily. The hormone oxytocin released during breast feeding acts to return the uterus to its regular size more quickly. Nursing her baby causes the mother's body to release oxytocin, which stimulates contractions which help shrink the uterus back to pre-pregnancy size while expelling the placenta. These contractions also shut off the maternal blood vessels that formerly fed the baby and discourage excessive bleeding. Women who choose not to breastfeed must be given synthetic oxytocin to prevent haemorrhage¹².
2. Studies show that women who have breast fed experiences reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer¹³.

If all women who do not breastfeed or who

breastfeed for less than 3 months were to do so for 4 to 12 months, breast cancer among parous premenopausal women could be reduced by 11 percent, judging from current rates. If all women with children lactated for 24 months or longer, however, then the incidence might be reduced by nearly 25 percent. This reduction would be even greater among women who first lactate at an early age.¹⁴

3. Some studies have found it may reduce the risk of developing type 2 Diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and cardiovascular diseases.
4. Exclusive breast feeding delay the return of menstrual period which can help extend time between pregnancies and thus act as a natural mean of contraception because of lactational amenorrhoea.¹⁵

BENEFITS FOR NEWBORN:

1. It is inexpensive.
2. Milk is available all the time and is free from all the pathogenic bacteria. Breastfeeding protects baby against diarrheal infections¹⁶.
3. It is available at the optimum temperature.
4. Its composition is ideal for infant growth. Its protein is in easily digestible form and it contains high lactose content. The latest study to support this statement was done in New Zealand. Here an 18 year longitudinal study of over 1,000 children found that those who were breastfed as infants had both better intelligence and academic achievement than children who were infant-formula fed¹⁷.
5. It contains immunoglobulin IgG and IgA and protects against certain infections such as E.coli, cholera, gastroenteritis, polio, tetanus, measles and other viruses.
6. It contains bifidus factor, which promotes the growth of lactobacillus and helps to lower the gut pH. It inhibits the growth of intestinal pathogens e.g E.coli and yeast.¹⁸
7. Breast milk is more specific and therefore allergy to breast milk is rare.
8. Respiratory and GIT illnesses are significantly less likely to develop or cause death in breastfed infant.
9. Intestinal flora of infants fed breast milk may protect them against infection.
10. Since breast milk directly enters from breast to infant who is sucking this milk while milk from other species like cow or formula milk contain germs due to handling and unhygienic bottles and these germs can enter infant body causing illness.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend it "...breastfeeding is an unequalled way

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of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; ... it forms a unique biological and emotional basis for the health of both mother and child; ...the anti-infective properties of breast milk help to protect infants against disease; and ... there is an important relationship between breastfeeding and child spacing".¹⁹ The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with solids gradually being introduced around this age when signs of readiness are shown. Supplemented breastfeeding is recommended until at least age two and then for as long as the mother and child wish.²⁰

CONCLUSION

It is proved that breast milk is the initial complete source of all the essential nutrients required by a newborn for physical, mental, intellectual and even spiritual development of a newborn.

RECOMMENDATION

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended up-to 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up-to two years of age or beyond. Women of our society must be made aware of the fact that breastfeeding is an obligation upon them in Islam and is encouraged both in Islam and also by medical science.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under:

Zahid M: Main idea and manuscript writing
Muhammad N: Bibliography.

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.