

Breast Crawl and Breast Feeding

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Breast feeding is the best feeding and natural. It has enormous advantages whatever the baby needs. It's the nature's gift to a mother to give the best gift to her baby. As per Lancet series 2016 breast feeding alone can reduce 156,000 child deaths (13% of under-5s), 3,900,000 episodes of diarrhea, 3,436,560 episodes of pneumonia and 4915 deaths due to breast cancer annually. Over and above this it would add 4300 cores to Indian Economy, adding 3 points to IQ of all children, rich or poor. Around 26% and 35% obesity and Type 2 Diabetes can be prevented if only breastfed the baby exclusively. Data shows that 1 out of 3 new cases could be prevented. Further evidence shows that survival rate is high among neonates for whom breastfeeding has initiated early i.e. within half an hour. As per The Telegraph on August 2 also highlighted that Exclusive breastfeeding saves the cost as well as lives of the children.

Hence it is recommended by WHO and UNICEF to start breast feeding as early as possible by putting the baby over the abdomen of mother soon after birth to initiate the first feed. This method called as "Breast Crawl". All the newborn has capacity to search the areola and reach to the breast also latch on to the breast once they were placed over the chest of the mother. This is possible as the smell of the chemical liberates from the Montgomery tubercle is same like liquor amine. UNICEF, WHO and WABA along with the scientific community strongly recommend initiating breastfeeding within a half-hour of birth. Studies proved that it could prevent around 22% of neonatal death by early initiation of breastfeeding especially in developing countries.

Breast crawl is the instinct of mammal (including human) newborns to move towards the nipple and attach to it for breastfeeding all by themselves. When the baby placed over the chest of the mother the baby starts its hand movement after 15 to 40 mins and the first suckling starts around 20 to 60 mins after birth. Baby can able to search nipple with the help of visual towards dark coloured areola and also recognize the voice of the mother.

There are different movements of the baby observed within this period i.e. from placing the baby on the chest of the mother to baby latch on to the breast. These movements are salivation starts, movement of upper limbs, movement of lower limbs, starting crawling, lifting the head and falling repeatedly, opening the eyes, looking the dark areola, moving towards the breast slowly by smelling the chemical and once reaching the areola then opening the mouth and trying to latch on. Finally latch on to the breast. These wonderful movements make the mother to enjoy and there starts the bonding. During this time the health care provider only need to support the mother and baby but not to push the baby or pull the breast to baby's mouth. The process need to be continued till the baby takes the first feed and goes to sleep. It has also proved that newborn is very active for the first 1 to 1 ½ hour after birth and they have well developed muscle tone to crawl and to reach to the breast. So the first feed need to be initiated as early as possible once the mother and baby stable. As per Widström, *et al.* (1987), stated that newborn can stay alert until 150 mins after birth and this is the precious time to initiate first feed otherwise the first feed will be delayed as the baby usually goes to sleep after this alert period.

It is very much important in today's scenario that the care providers must know the importance of initiation of the first feed and help the mother and baby to start breastfeeding putting the baby over the chest of the mother. Once the baby starts to suckle the breast there

starts releasing of the hormones prolactin and oxytocin. prolactin helps for production of the milk and oxytocin helps for the contraction of the uterus and also bonding between mother and baby. it also helps for the milk flow so called as letdown reflex. It is also called as love hormone as more oxytocin released when the mother is happy and develops good feeling towards her newborn. Oxytocin also helps to calm the baby. Studies shown that babies those initiates early feed were more relaxed ,sleep longer and have less fear and anxiety. not only this even baby's vitals like temperature, heart rate , blood sugar stabilizes early compare to other babies. by this hypothermia, hypoglycemia could be prevented too, which are the risk for newborn survival. Due to all these advantages it is strongly recommended by WHO to initiate first feed at Labour room by Breast crawl. All most all the babies are born normal and there is no urgent need for any invasive interventions, so other procedures like giving vit K, assessment of the newborn can be delayed until the first feed of the baby unless otherwise medically indicated. Currently it was recommended by AAP that "all healthy infants should be placed and remain in skin-to-skin contact with their mothers immediately after delivery until the first feeding occurs".

Dos and Don'ts for success of the Breast Crawl

For the Mother

- Mother need to be put in the comfortable position after labour process and supported with pillows if needed.
- Prepare the mother psychologically to start the first feed.
- Place the baby over the abdomen of the mother and cover a sheet over the baby and mother to maintain temperature.
- Do not wipe or clean the breast before feeding.
- Baby and mother need to be together in breast crawl until the first feed initiated and baby come out from the breast after completion of the feed.

For the Baby

- Observe the baby for crying, once the baby cried well no need of suctioning.
- Monitor the APGAR Score of the baby.
- Wipe the baby's body with a dry sheet except the hands.
- Put the baby on the chest of the mother in prone position.
- Instruct the mother to hold the baby and observe the baby should not fall.
- Make the mother and baby in skin-to skin contact till the first feed completed.
- Delay the procedures like assessment of the baby and giving Vitamin K unless medical indicated and once the baby is stable.

The breast crawl is no longer a common practice in modern hospitals despite it having tremendous benefits for both mother and baby. The first skin-to-skin contact with the mother allows for bonding, provides a heat source for the baby, comforts him from the trauma of birth, releases oxytocin that helps letdown of milk and helps the baby to latch better and is the beginning of a healthy breastfeeding relationship. Release of oxytocin also helps to contract the uterus thereby reduced bleeding.

Conclusion

Breast milk (Colostrum-the first milk) as proved is the first immunization for the new born and also has lots of benefits for mother and baby. It has also seen the that if the first feed delayed there is risk for the lives of baby. To initiate first feed does not cost at all instead it is economical. The most important factor here to initiate first feed are the health care providers...they are the one who conducts delivery of the baby. Hence they need to get trained and educated on importance of breast crawl and the magic behind to initiate first feed. Mother need to be prepared mentally to initiate breast crawl.

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I like to acknowledge all the Members of EC Paediatric Journal for giving me this opportunity for editorial... as this week 1 - 7th Aug is World breastfeeding week so I thought of this topic to sensitize all health personnels.

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