

INTRODUCTION

Weaning is a vulnerable period in infant's life, during which the child is still growing extremely rapidly. It is a complex process involving the introduction of non-breast milk, reduction in suckling activity and eventually terminations of breast feeding. However, weaning process is vital for infants not from nutritional status but also in establishing normal feeding habits (*Nelson et al., 2000*).

The concept of weaning is a major issue for infants and parents, thus weaning is defined as any change from one form of feeding to another, this include changing from liquids to solids, from breast to bottle or cup and from bottle to cup (*Dietz and Stern 1999*). Meanwhile, the first year of life is a crucial time for physical and mental development. It is an exciting time of learning through exploration and experimentation. To allow for this rapid growth and activity a diet which is both nutritious and energy dense is needed. The food which infants encounter should be both varied in flavor, texture and color to attract them and also provide the valuable nutrients needed (*Falchuck, 1999*).

Appropriate age for weaning or for introducing solid foods remains controversial. Nutritionally, breast milk or prepared formula provides all the necessary calories and nutrients for

optimal growth for the first 6 months of life. By 6 months of age infants have attained other developmental capabilities that make the introduction of supplemental food easier, as stated by *Patricia et al., (2000)*. In addition, many cultural influences mandate weaning time and process. Public and social pressure have influenced weaning for some families (*Helsing and King, 1997*).

Worldwide, weaning practices are very varied with regard to when supplementary foods are introduced into the infant's diet, what food are given and how long breast-feeding is continued. In some countries, weaning foods are given as a supplement to breast milk before 4 months of age and the length of time breast feeding is continued may vary from 6 months to over 2 years (*Walker and Rools, 2001*).

Weaning can be defined as a difficult time requiring patience and understanding from the parents, as many infants do not immediately like new flavors and textures foods (*Cheadle et al., 2001*). Weaning is a hazardous period and shows the peak of nutritional risks. The young child has to struggle against bacterial infections and parasitic infestations from contaminated food and he is liable to psychological problems as he is separated and deprived from his mother's breast. In addition, weaning diarrhea occurs as a result of interaction of malnutrition, intestinal infection and decreased absorption of

inadequately prepared food and this is considered to be the major killer of infant in developing countries (*Helm and Lang, (2000) and Adward, (2002)*).

As reported by *WHO (2000)*, improved health and nutritional status of children is based on the increased of mothers understanding about their own children needs. In addition, health personnel especially nurses have an important role to translate scientific knowledge to improve health especially to many mothers in rural areas and poor urban communities who are ill educated about how to feed their infants and they need to learn the art of infants' feeding.