Introduction

Breast feeding is a highly emotive subject and its advocates have often depended more on personal beliefs and historical evidence than on hard scientific data. In recent years, there has been a phenomenal increase in the use of cliches such as "breast is best". Breast feeding is cited as an important component of motherhood and its naturalness has been equated with rightness (Chandra, 1978).

The Jellifes, underline this by stating that "in any part of the world, no single pediatric measure has such wide spread and dramatic potential for child health as a return to breast feeding" (Jelliffe and Jelliffe, 1978_a).

In underdeveloped communities, infants who are breast fed suffer much less from infection than artificially fed infants (Jelliffe, 1976). There is also some evidence to suggest that feeding fresh or stored breast milk may help to control or prevent bacterial gastroenteritis in premature infants (Svirsky, 1958).

Human breast milk contains a spectrum of interacting specific and nonspecific antimicrobial resistance factors acting at a variable number of levels and

numerous sites. These include physicochemical properties, immunoglobulins, iron bidning proteins, interferon, polymorphonuclear leucocytes, macrophages, lymphocytes and others (Chandra, 1978).

Gastroenteritis is one of the major problems facing infancy in our community; and infant's mortality rate during the first year of life in Egypt during 1979 was 76/1000, 52.5% of deaths was due to gastroenteritis (Central Agency for Public Mobilisation & Statistics,1982).Breast feeding could be used as a unique, cheap and available weapon to combat it. Three major factcrs have been proposed to account for the protective effect of breast milk in the small intestine. First, the ability to neutralize bacterial entenotoxins (Stoliar et al.,1976). Second, the prevention of bacterial adhesion to the mucosal surface of the small intestine (Fubara and Freter, 1973). Third, the ability of colostrum and milk to inhibit the multiplication of E coli and other bacteria in the small intestine (Kohler, 1974).