
Relationship Between infant feeding and gastroenteritis

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There is increasing epidemiologic data supporting the contention that breast feeding protects infants against gastroenteritis. This protective effect of human milk may be mediated by several components. the main one is proeably the secretory IgA. This study was undertaken to delineate the differences in prevalence, frequency and severity of diarrhea between breast fed and artificially fed infants. Two groups were studied. Each consisted of 500 patients, the two groups were comparable as regards their age and the socio-economic status of their parents. Certain important differences were noticeable between the two groups. It was found that the prevalence of diarrhea among artificially fed infants (48.2%) is higher than that in breast fed infants (34.8%).* It was also remarkable to find that breast fed infants got a lesser number of diarrheal attacks than artificially fed ones; and when the latter got diarrhea they had a more severe form of dehydration than the breast fed ones.* A significant difference was found between both groups regarding the prevalence of lactose intolerance. where artificially fed infants experienced more lactose intolerance as evidenced by their low stools pH. So, prolonged diarrhea was expected in the artificially fed infants. At the same time the rate of occurrence of lactose intolerance increased with the number of diarrheal attacks they got. Few fecal leucocytes was found in about 2/3 of patients in both of the studied groups; while moderate to marked increase in fecal leucocytes was found in the remaining one third which was of no statistical significant difference. Recommendations Breast feeding is clearly the method of choice for infant feeding and should be encouraged in all infants specially in the developing countries. Oral vaccination of the mothers against E. coli. Shigella and Rota virus help the development of antibodies against them in breast milk. Consequently this leads to a decrease in the incidence of gastroenteritis. Bottle-fed infants should be classified as "high risk and their mothers should be given the guidance necessary to insure proper usage of this potentially dangerous method. Also prolonged diarrhea should be anticipated due to the high incidence of lactose intolerance among them. It is tempting to contemplate the possibility of modifying artificial feeds by providing them with some of the anti-microbial factors which are present in human milk.