

Complementary Feeding Practices - A KAP* Study

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Abstract: *Complementary feeding plays a major role in the health and nutrition of growing children. As the child grows, his nutrition demands are not met adequately by breastfeeding and hence a proper and a timely transition towards healthy complementary foods is a necessity. However, faulty feeding practices adversely affect the growth and the nutrition of children and the roots of the same lie in lack of proper knowledge regarding the practices. Here an attempt has been made to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices for the same and to identify the gap in the feeding practices among the parents of the patients admitted in a tertiary care centre.*

Keywords: Complementary, misconceptions, growth, healthy feeding

1. Introduction

Complementary feeding often overlooked forms an important step towards a healthy childhood. Especially in developing countries like India, healthy complementary feeding practices can have a major social and economical impact by prevention of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies and hence growth faltering.

2. Aims and objectives

- To assess the knowledge of parents regarding complementary feeding.
- To assess the attitude and practices towards recommended feeding practices.

3. Materials and methods

- Type of study: Cross-sectional
- Parents of 100 children (6 months-2 years) admitted in Civil hospital, Ahmadabad were interviewed with a pre-designed questionnaire, followed by a correct complementary feeding advice to them.

4. Observations

- 82% parents knew when to initiate complementary feeds but only 67% initiated it at 6 months.
- Liquid diets (63%) were mostly preferred initially followed by semisolid (32%) and solid (5%) foods.
- 64% considered outside food better.
- Rice water (72%) and top milk (67%) were the feeds considered ideal. 62% added ghee/oil to the child's food. Eggs are preferred only after 5 years (76%). 87% believed that banana should never be given to a young child.
- 42% kept the food in front of their child, 30% roamed around with him while 28% would coax the child to complete his feed.
- 97% believed in continuing breastfeeding along with complementary feed. 52% planned to continue it as long as the child wants and 34% till 2 years of age.

- 58% hadn't received any advice regarding complementary feeding. 30% received it from the health professionals and 12% from multimedia.

5. Conclusions

- Complementary feeding is often overlooked and its importance in growth and development of a child is not adequately understood and felt.
- Misconceptions prevail regarding complementary feeding practices with a dire need to correct them.
- Lack of proper advice regarding complementary feeding practices is an important cause of faulty feeding practices.
- Majority of faulty practices are amenable to a proper feeding advice.
- All the points of contact especially vaccination visits should be properly utilized for a proper counseling advice.

6. Future scope

The study clearly indicates a clear lack in knowledge among the people regarding proper complementary feeding practices. It also highlights the associated lacunae in attitude and practice of the people for the same. The same needs to be corrected and the best possible way to do this is by proper education of the people and encouragement of the healthy practices aiming them.

Also increase in involvement of mass media for people education along with education of the attendants during each of the point of contacts like vaccination would aid in improving the nutrition and hence the health status of the population.

A repeat study after proper targeted interventions would aid in assessing the amount of gap bridged in the faulty feeding practices.

References

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