



Choice of Breastfeeding

Prachi Omkar Shetye *

Corresponding Author: Prachi Omkar Shetye, (B.P.Th.) (IBCLC), Lactation Consultant, Somerset Clinic (DHCC), Medeor 24 x 7 Hospital (Dubai), Prachilactation-Online Lactation Clinic (Based in India), UAE.

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There are so many different opinions about breastfeeding among women all around the world. For some mothers it is most natural to breastfeed while some worry whether they can breastfeed and some follow their friends and family's lead, basing their decision on the experiences they have heard about. Also, there are some who clearly antagonize breastfeeding because for them it is an indication of being tied to their baby without freedom to go back to their lifestyle for next few months.

I firmly believe that it is a mother's and family's decision of what is their preferred method of feeding their baby and whether they want to use breast milk or formula for feeding. I feel my part is to help them reach this decision by giving them correct updated information about the use of breastmilk/formula and also about the method of feeding.

Majority of families prefer bottle feeding and formula because it is easy for them to care for the baby as mother is not the only one in charge of feeding and other family members or caregivers can take over the role of feeding, but this is easily possible even with breast milk. A mother can pump and keep the milk available for other family members to feed the baby using spoon feeding or cup feeding.

The other most common reason to opt for formula is that the mother wants to go back to work before the baby is 6 months old. Many workplaces in many countries including India and UAE expect mothers to return back to work before the first 6 months with less working hours. This will ultimately affect exclusive breastfeeding and that makes mothers wonder if the whole process of achieving exclusive breastfeeding is even worth working on. Here it is very important for mothers to understand what is expected to achieve from gaining exclusive breastfeeding in first few months:

The breastmilk supply gets established as the supply builds on demand- supply basis.

Baby learns to breastfeed effortlessly at home as well as in other public places.

Since the breast milk supply is already established, mothers can just pump once or twice at work and get enough milk for the baby to exclusively feed on breastmilk. So, it is possible for most mothers to join work as scheduled and yet let their baby get benefits from breastmilk while reducing the cost imposed on their household by use of formula.

Yet another reason I have come across, for not wanting to consider breastfeeding is the anatomical variations of breast.

Some mothers with small breasts are worried that they can't produce enough milk.

Some mothers are concerned about the shape of breasts that might change post breastfeeding.

Some mothers with inverted nipples/ flat nipples don't think that it is possible to latch.

Some mothers with breast surgeries think that they can't produce enough milk.

Some mothers on medication feel that their milk is not appropriate for their babies.

Each of these conditions have to be individually evaluated by the Lactation Consultant, alongside other members of the healthcare team to work with mothers and help them achieve what is possible to achieve according to updated breastfeeding guidelines.

This last group of mothers I am about to address are those mothers, who want to breastfeed but their family, friends and sadly doctors around them are normalizing formula feeding and not providing them the opportunity to explore the option of breastfeeding. These mothers and families are convinced that they want to give formula to their babies and some of the strange reasons these families give upon intervention by Lactation Consultant:

Mothers in our families don't manage to breastfeed as we have a tendency to get mastitis , so we request doctors to give medicines to dry the milk post birth of the baby.

Milk didn't come more than a few drops in hospital so it was suggested to use formula exclusively.

Mother was explained that she has low supply , so was told to stop breastfeeding and use formula.

In most of these situations mixed breastfeeding or exclusive breastfeeding can be achieved if the mother works with Lactation Consultants but the mothers are not referred or not willing to meet Lactation Consultant.

I have worked with many pregnant women and have taken online breastfeeding classes for them where I have provided them with correct update information. I have followed these mothers and have realized many of them managed to reach either mixed or exclusive breastfeeding. I feel that providing information before a baby is born gives power in the hands of young mothers to decide and implement the basics of breastfeeding. Another advantage was they sought support of Lactation Consultant in hospital/private practice or online to make their breastfeeding journey better whenever they faced breastfeeding issues.

I would like to conclude by saying that a Lactation Consultant should not be portrayed as someone forcing breastfeeding on a mother but a professional helping mother and baby to achieve their feeding goals.