

## Chapter 20: The Schedule of Breast Feeding

The experts have suggested two methods for feeding of the babies. Some are of opinion that for feeding the child well thought out schedules have to be devised and the feeding should be done implicitly at those predetermined intervals. Between two feedings some have prescribed a delay of three hours and some suggest a gap of four hours. In the interim period it is recommended to abstain from feeding the baby.

Some other experts do not approve of this type of scheduling. And they believe in feeding the baby more frequently on the basis of the indication of the appetite by the baby. They say that whenever the baby shows the desire for food, it must be fed.

Some other nutritionists feel that the latter method of feeding is more suitable as they believe that the baby must get the milk whenever it shows signs of hunger. Both the methods, however, have their own pros and cons as illustrated here:

1. Hunger or thirst of a child cannot be determined positively because it cannot express its need clearly. In the initial stage of feeding it will be drinking the milk for sating its appetite and then it continues to suckle the breasts. In such situations the child cries not so much with hunger as with the desire to suckle the mother's breast.

The mother too gives her milk to the child to stop his crying. Often the child cries without any appetite for food but the mother gives it the milk thinking that it is hungry. The child therefore drinks the mother's milk while it has the appetite and sometimes when it doesn't. It is a well established fact that taking of food at erratic intervals is not good for the health of the children as it is for the adults this habit might upset the digestive system of the child.

This is why unplanned feeding of babies is fraught with risk of illness for them.

'Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

“Excessive eating and eating more thereafter should be avoided. Those who eat more are more likely to fall ill.” [1](#)

2. The child who drinks milk without any controlled schedule will have a disorganized existence from the very beginning and grow into a disorderly adult.

3. It is common practice that whenever a baby cries, the mother's breast is given to it without trying to determine the cause of the crying. Such children get into the habit of skulking all the time. They think that crying and shouting is the only way to get things done according to their wishes. They can never show patience and courage in doing anything. They want to achieve their end immediately even if they have to cry profusely for the purpose. They do not feel ashamed at playing such shameful antics.

4. The parents and other members of the families are always restless because of such children.

Dr Jalali writes about such children:

“If the feeding schedule of a child is fixed in consultation with an expert pediatrician then it will get used to the timings and the mothers will understand when the child is hungry and when its appetite is sated.

Secondly, people do their daily tasks as a force of habit. Similarly feeding of the child too becomes a habit and is done almost automatically at the scheduled timings.<sup>2</sup>

Russel says:

“These days an ordinary mother knows the norms of bringing up children. She knows that it is important to feed the baby at predetermined intervals and not whenever it cries for some reason or the other. She knows that such regime is followed to keep the digestive system of the baby in good trim...

When the children see that the parents are acceding to their cries, it becomes their second habit and keeps crying at the slightest excuse. It also happens that the repeated episodes of crying over a long period earn them the anger of their parents. When the children realize this, they become morose and the world looks cold, dry and bleak to them.”<sup>3</sup>

Attention must be paid to a few points:

1. For all the children the same program of feeding could not be possibly adopted. Every child will have its own digestive and nutritive requirements. And also the food requirements of any child are very dynamic. The digestive system of the new-born will be delicately tiny for the first forty to fifty days from birth.

Therefore it can retain very small quantity of milk. It will be able to take a very small quantity of milk at a time. But it becomes hungry very soon thereafter. During this period the feeding times have to be of shorter intervals, say, every hour and a half to two hours. But as the children grow the gap between the feeds have to be increase, say, a feed every three to four hours or even more.

2. All the children will not be of the same physical condition and digestive capacity. Therefore an

individual feeding program has to be developed for every individual child. Some children become hungry quite soon after a feed and others take more time for the same. Careful mothers are very observant and they take care to design an ideal schedule of feeding for their children in consultation with experts.

3. Whenever milk is given to the baby, care has to be taken that it is fully satisfied with the feed. But mothers must carefully observe that the newborn babies fall asleep while feeding on their breasts. In such instances they may not be fully fed and the mother has to gently strike the back of the child that it wakes up and completes its feed.

4. When the complete program of feeding the child is prepared it must be put to practice very carefully. The gaps between the feeds must be strictly adhered to. In between two scheduled feeds the child must not be given the milk even if it cries. This task needs patience and firmness on the part of the mother to ensure that the child gets used to the regime. Then the child will awake automatically at the scheduled time to receive its feed. Patience and forbearance will become a part of the nature of such children.

5. The feeding schedule of the children must be prepared in such a way that from midnight to dawn there is no need of feeding it. When the child takes to this habit, both the mother and the child will have a good night's rest.

6. The breasts must be cleaned with a little cotton wool after every feed. This is essential for the health and hygiene and will also prevent the chance of injury to the breast.

7. When a child suckles the mother's milk some air too enters its digestive tract and makes it uneasy. Therefore, after every feed the child has to be raised a little and its back is gently tapped to see that the air comes out of its digestive system.

8. The suckling baby should be fed from both the breasts of the mother. This should be done to avoid drying of the milk, which can result in the pain of the breast. One lady says, "Imam as-Sadiq told to me, 'do not feed your child only from one of your breasts to ensure that it gets complete food.'"<sup>4</sup>

9. The lactating mothers should take care that they do not perform very tiring physical tasks and avoid spells of anger. This is advised because such events can affect their capacity to produce milk, which ultimately is bad for the child.

<sup>1</sup>. Mustdarak al-wasail, v3, p. 82

<sup>2</sup>. Ruwan shinasi kudak, p. 224

<sup>3</sup>. Dar Tarbiat, p. 78

<sup>4</sup>. Wasail al-shiah, v15, p. 176

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