

Weaning practices in rural Tumkur.

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Abstract

Objective of the present project is to study the knowledge, attitude and practice of weaning among lactating mothers in rural Tumkur. One hundred and ten lactating mothers were interviewed by using a pretested questionnaire regarding various weaning practices. The data collected was analyzed. Forty eight (43.63%) mothers had the knowledge on correct time of initiation of weaning. Ragi sari was the most preferred weaning food. Eight (13%) mothers were using commercial preparations. Fifty five (90.16%) mothers followed the clockwise scheduled pattern and 56 (91.8%) mothers preferred to use freshly prepared foods. There is still lack of knowledge about correct weaning practices in the rural areas. Education to rural pregnant and lactating mothers regarding weaning should be accelerated.

Keywords: Weaning, Ragi sari, Lactating mothers

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Introduction

Weaning is a process of gradual introduction of semisolid foods and liquids other than breast milk to an infant to facilitate optimal growth. The ideal age of weaning is six months. The desirable weaning food should be inexpensive, home available, clean and easily digestible. It should be rich in calories and protein with adequate amount of trace elements like iron, calcium, vitamins etc.

Weaning period is crucial for young infants. It is well known that there is increased incidence of infection particularly diarrheal diseases during weaning period than any other period of life. This is because of improper preparation, storage and unhygienic feeding method. Malnutrition is also another common problem during weaning due to lack of knowledge and special needs of growing child. [1]

The weaning practices that are followed depend on the knowledge, beliefs and attitude of the mother. The practices are passed from one generation to other as every young mother is supported by her mother or mother-in-law during early period of motherhood. Hence this study was conducted to know the common weaning practices in rural Tumkur.

Material and Methods

This is a cross sectional study comprising of 110 lactating mothers in rural Tumkur (field practice area of Sri Siddhartha Medical College, Tumkur) who were interviewed by using a pretested questionnaire. The data on weaning practices such as age of initiation, type of food, frequency etc, were collected and analyzed.

Results

Forty eight mothers (43.63%) had the knowledge on initiation of weaning food after six months of age and weaning was already started by 61 mothers during the study. Forty two mothers (68.85%) had started before six months. Ragi sari (porridge prepared with sprouted ragi) was the most preferred weaning food. Twenty eight mothers (45.9%) were giving weaning food twice daily and 19 mothers (31.14%) were giving only once a day. Fifty five mothers (90.16%) followed the clockwise scheduled pattern and only 6 mothers (9.83%) were giving on demand. For 41 mothers (67.21%) grandmother and for 15 mothers (24.59%) mother-in-law were the major decision makers on weaning. Fifty six mothers (91.8%) preferred to use freshly prepared foods.

Eight mothers (13%) were using commercial foods like cerelac and farex.

There was delay in initiation of weaning by 11 mothers (18%) and the reason was belief of having sufficient milk in 7 mothers (63.63%) and food cannot be digested by the baby in 4 mothers (36.36%). Forty two mothers (68.85%) had not introduced fruits and 38 mothers (62.29%) had not introduced vegetables as weaning foods during the study.

Table 1. Mothers according to weaning practices (n=61)

Weaning practice	Frequency	Percent
<4 months	14	22.95
4-6 months	28	45.9
6 months	10	16.39
>6 months	9	14.75
Total	61	100

Table 2. Mothers according to religion (n=110)

Religion	frequency	Percent
Hindu	72	79.2
Muslim	31	34.1
Christian	7	7.7
Total	110	100

Table 3. Educational status of mothers

Education	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	21	19.09
No formal education	15	13.63
Primary	12	10.95
Middle	23	20.9
High school	38	34.54
College	1	0.9
Total	110	100

Table 4. Mothers according to the type of weaning (n=61)

Type of weaning	frequency	Percent
Biscuits	5	8.19
Cerelac	6	9.83
Cow's milk	3	4.91
Farex	2	3.27
Goat milk	1	1.63
Ragi sari	35	57.35
Total	61	100

Table 5. Mothers according to the decision maker on weaning schedule (n=61)

Decision maker on weaning schedule	Frequency	Percent
Doctor	2	3.27
Junior health assistant female	1	1.63
Mother-in-law	15	24.59
Grand mother	26	42.62
Others	17	27.86
Total	61	100

Discussion

Weaning period is very crucial in an infant's life. If it is not adopted properly, baby is going to suffer from various health problems like malnutrition, infection etc. Hence it is very important to have adequate knowledge among the lactating mothers regarding the time of initiation, type of food to be introduced and frequency of feeding etc. Weaning practices depend upon various factors such as religion, cultural practices, superstitions, beliefs, socioeconomic status, educational status of the mother, geographic area (urban/rural) etc. [3]

In the present study, 43.63% mothers had knowledge on initiating weaning at the appropriate time i.e. 6 months onwards. However BPNI (1991) study has observed that 90% had weaned at the appropriate age. In the present study it is due to lack of knowledge amongst the study group regarding the correct age of weaning. Ragi sari was the most preferred weaning food in our study compared to Chandrasekhar et al (urban) study in which cereal pulse mix was the most preferred one[4,5,6]. In the present study 45.9% mothers were giving weaning food twice daily and 90.16% had a fixed schedule rather than on demand unlike breast feeding. Sixty seven percent of mothers gave weaning food as advised by grandmothers and mother-in-laws and 91.8% mothers were using freshly prepared foods. In the present study, the common reason for delayed weaning was the mother's perception that breast milk is still sufficient for the baby (63.63%) followed by belief that weaning food is indigestible (36.36%) as compared to Singhania et al[3] study of 120 children in which reasons for delayed weaning were fear of liver disorders in 94 (78.35%), vomiting by the baby in 19(15.8%) and fear of indigestion in 7 (5.8%). Ideally fruits and vegetables are introduced in an infant's diet at 7 months of age but in the present study 68.85% mothers had not introduced at all even at one year of age due to lack of knowledge regarding benefits of fruits and vegetables in the weaning diet.[7,8,9,10]

Conclusion

The present study on weaning practices in rural Tumkur which is field practice area of Sri Siddhartha Medical College shows that even in 21st century there is obvious lack of correct knowledge about infant weaning. So it is a must to accelerate the education to the rural pregnant and lactating mothers by various health workers, media and social organizations.

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