



LACTATION INSIGHTS

WELCOME to the Spring, 2005 edition of Lactation Insights! This newsletter is written and published quarterly by Janet to support breastfeeding mothers and their families.

OUTDATED GROWTH CHARTS

A new study carried out by the World Health Organization shows babies who were exclusively breastfed for six months are healthier and **leaner** than their formula-fed counterparts. Research by the WHO found that current growth charts are based on American babies that have been fed formula. These growth charts are used in almost every baby clinic in the US. The latest WHO study collected data from 8,440 babies in six countries between 1997 and 2004. The results indicated that target weights for children 2-3 years old were 15% to 20% too high. This has led to fears that the old charts could be playing a part in the obesity epidemic.

The WHO currently recommends that all babies be “exclusively” breastfed for 6 months, before solid foods are introduced. Dr. Mercedes de Onis, nutrition expert and coordinator of the WHO study said, “The problem is that by the current charts, breastfed babies seem to be growing poorly from as early as 2-3 months, when they are perfectly healthy.” When the breastfed baby drops lower on the growth charts, many pediatricians recommend supplementing with formula, starting solid foods early, or weaning completely. The breastfed baby should be considered the biological norm against which all other babies and children are measured. According to the results of the WHO study, weight gain based on breastfed babies should be 7% less than the current recommendations.

Formula-fed infants have higher energy requirements and as a result they consume more calories and put on more weight. The breastfed baby has a lower body temperature, lower metabolic rate, different sleep patterns and is leaner. They are two different sets of babies and as a result they grow differently.

Children who have been breastfed are less likely to become obese, they have lower rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, etc. It is the healthy breastfed baby that should be the gold standard to which babies fed by artificial means are compared.

COLIC IN THE BREASTFED BABY

Being a Lactation Consultant often involves detective work along with creative problem solving. The answers are not always easy or clear-cut when a client comes into my office with a problem. We work together to find solutions.

When a baby comes into my office with symptoms of colic, many mothers assume the irritability in her baby is related to foods that the mother is consuming. While this is possible, sometimes colic is related to an oversupply of breastmilk in the mother or difficulty coordinating sucking and swallowing in the infant. Babies who are gaining more than 2 pounds per month are often gassy and have explosive bowel movements, making them uncomfortable and unhappy. When oversupply is addressed by changing the feeding routine, mom and baby are happier.

But what if the oversupply is reduced and the baby is still not calm and content between feedings? Infants with eczema and crying are more likely to have an allergy or sensitivity to foods in their mother’s diet. I have an

extensive background in nutrition and often talk to moms about their diets. I inquire if there is a family history of allergies. Frequently there is one allergenic food that the mother has been consuming in large quantities, like cow's milk for omnivores or soy for vegans. Eliminating that one food can sometimes change the baby's entire personality in 24-48 hours. And just to make things even more complex, oversupply can cause gut damage that can predispose to allergy. This often presents as blood in the stools and that can take up to 6 weeks to resolve.

FORMULA-FED BABIES HAVE HIGHER BLOOD PRESSURE AND HIGHER CHOLESTEROL

Recently, British researchers concluded that formula-fed babies grow up to have higher blood pressure than breastfed babies. A recent study showed that for every 3 months a child was breastfed, his or her systolic blood pressure reading (the top number) went down 0.2 points, on average. Breastfeeding time did not significantly affect diastolic blood pressure (the lower number).

A 1% reduction in systolic blood pressure is associated with about a 1.5% reduction in all-cause mortality, equivalent to about 8,000 deaths per year in the US. Lower blood pressure is directly linked to lower risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and other related illnesses. Breastfed children tend to consume less sodium, which is another factor that can influence blood pressure. Breastmilk also contains long-chain fatty acids, which are compounds that can affect the development of blood vessels early on.

Another article published in the Lancet medical journal concludes that teenagers who

had been breastfed had a 14% lower ratio of bad to good cholesterol and lower concentrations of a protein that is a marker for cardiovascular disease. The author of the study (Lucas) said, "The more human milk you have in the newborn period, the lower your cholesterol level is, and the lower your blood pressure is 16 years later. He suspects there is a hormonal trigger very early in life that influences infant growth and sets the system for cardiovascular risk later in life.

Other studies have shown that breastfed babies are less likely to be overweight, have fewer childhood infections and allergies, fewer behavioral problems and have higher IQ's. As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, formula feeding can cause babies to eat more than they need which may lead to excessive weight gain in some babies. Excess weight is associated with higher blood pressures and promotes insulin resistance, which often precedes development of diabetes in adulthood.

Groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommend that all mothers breastfeed their babies for the first year, and two years if at all possible.

HINT

When feeding expressed breastmilk to your baby in a bottle, gently swirl breastmilk to mix the fat. Shaking the milk breaks the protein chains.

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