

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge and current complementary feeding practices both in good health and in illnesses, among mothers who have infants in the age group of 4-9 months in the MOH area, Kuliyaipitiya.

A group of 376 children were studied using a multi stage sampling technique and a descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted by a trained interviewer administered structured questionnaire.

The majority (88%) of mothers were housewives and the mean age was 28 years. The proportion of respondents who believed in rice feeding ceremony was 48% and all these mothers were Sinhalese.

The proportion of mothers who exclusively breast-fed up to four months was 67%. There was a statistically significant association between knowledge on complementary feeding and exclusive breast feeding practice. However, educational status appears to have no influence. At the time of interview, 96.5% of the mothers were practicing breast-feeding, with 52% breast-feeding only at their convenience. Use of formula milk, was associated with the economic status of the family.

The majority (71%) of mothers had introduced complementary feeding at the age of four months. The introduction of complementary feeding was not associated with either, educational status of the mother, or their knowledge on complementary feeding.

Irrespective of the age of introduction, congee and soup appeared to be the most popular complementary food. Commercial preparation like, biscuits also showed

to be popular. Feeding of rice was not commoner up to seven months, and only 53% give rice to their infant at seven months. Use of animal protein in the complementary food was low in all ages. The use of oil in the preparation of complementary foods was observed to be low in all age groups with only 21% using it. This use was associated with educational status of mothers as well as age of infants. Use of leafy vegetables in complementary feeding also significantly associated with the age of infants.

It is encouraging to note that 80% of mothers used “cup and spoon” to feed, although 36% used a bottle as well.

Continuation of complementary feeding during illnesses was 51% and this correct practice was associated with educational status of mothers as well as their knowledge on complementary feeding. Small minority (7%) gave a extra meal during convalescent period. Majorities (71.3%) of respondents were aware that the fluids should be increased during diarrhoea. Only 16.8% of the respondents were aware that solid foods could be given during diarrhoea.

This study revealed certain deficiencies in the knowledge and complementary feeding practices among mothers. It needs greater health education and, to overcome this deficiencies better supervision to ensure the giving of correct massages. Regular in-service training of the field staff to update knowledge and skills and organized training for volunteer health workers is recommended to improve the IEC activities both in clinics and field. Training of curative staff to improve the health education of mothers on complementary feeding practices with especial emphasis on feeding during infection too is recommended.

