

BREASTFEEDING – MISTAKEN BELIEFS

Colostrum is not good, or even dangerous for babies.

NO! Colostrum is essential for normal growth and development: 1) First immunisation – protects against intestinal and other infections. 2) Purgative to reduce severity of jaundice.

Infants need special teas or other fluids before breastfeeding.

NO! Any pre-lacteal feeds (feed given before breastfeeding has started) increase the infant's risk of infection, reduce the likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding and shorten the duration of breastfeeding.

Babies will not get enough food or fluid with only colostrum and breastmilk.

NO! Colostrum is sufficient for a baby's first feeds. It is normal for a newborn to lose 3-6 percent of birth weight. They are born with a store of water and sugar in their bodies to use at this time.

Baby will get too cold.

NO! Babies are at safe temperatures when skin-to-skin with their mothers. Amazingly, the mother's breast temperature rises 0.5 °C within two minutes of having the baby on her chest.

Mothers are too exhausted after labour and delivery to feed their baby immediately.

NO! The surge of oxytocin that comes with skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding helps to calm a mother after the birth of her baby.

It is very important to suction the baby's mouth, nose, and oropharynx before the first breath to prevent inhaling birth fluids, especially if the baby had a bowel movement during the labour.

NO! Suctioning the normal healthy newborn does not reduce the occurrence of meconium aspiration, and may injure the tissue of the mouth, throat or vocal cords. Gastric suction also interferes with breastfeeding.

Vitamin K and medication to prevent gonorrhoea eye infection must be given immediately after birth.

NO! The American College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine state that these important preventive measures can be delayed for as long as an hour, until after the baby has breastfed, without risk to the infant. They should not in any case require separation of mother and baby.