



## Tackling challenges in adoption of breastfeeding babies

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PUDUCHERRY

With low information and insufficient out-of-home facilities among the limiting factors faced by women in the adoption of breastfeeding babies, several events were recently hosted aimed at raising awareness and strengthening community support for lactating mothers.

The challenge is illustrated in the data of National Survey (NFHS-5) which indicated that only 41% of infants in India are breastfed within one hour of birth and only 64% are exclusively breastfed for six months.

Jipmer organised a rally, interactive lecture, role play and art work exhibitions, centred on breastfeeding during the recent World Breastfeeding Week celebrations, on this year's theme 'Closing the Gap – Breastfeeding Support for All'.

Led by the Nursing Department, the events were supported by the Depart-



Jipmer organised a rally to raise awareness and promote breastfeeding. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ments of Paediatrics, Neonatology and Obstetrics & Gynaecology and College of Nursing.

Santhi Tamilmani, Nursing Superintendent, Jipmer Women and Children Hospital outlined the multiple benefits of breastfeeding. Useful information regarding the importance of breastfeeding and essential

newborn care were imparted to mothers and caregivers.

### Natural standards

According to the Department of Neonatology, breastfeeding and human milk are the natural standards for infant feeding and nutrition. Optimal nutrition during the first two

years of a child's life is crucial, as it lowers morbidity and mortality, reduces risk of chronic diseases and fosters better neurodevelopment.

Breastmilk contains right nutrients and minerals for the newborn in correct proportions. Exclusive breastfeeding prevents diarrhoea, pneumonia and

ear infection among infants. Cow's milk, gripe water, formula feeds and bottle-feeding are harmful to newborns and should be avoided.

Medical literature has reiterated the role of breastfeeding in preventing malnutrition and ensuring food security for infants and young children, which on a larger sense serve to lift people and nations out of the hunger and poverty cycle.

Manjubala Dash, professor of Nursing and Infant and Young Child Feeding (ICYF), national trainer, pointed to insufficient awareness, low confidence and inadequate supportive mechanisms in public health institutions and workplace for working women as factors found to be among common impediments.

While the challenge is daunting, the solutions remain simple. In fact, the World Health Organisation states that a single cost-effective measure could save the lives of around

8,20,000 children and 20,000 mothers every year.

Experts called upon all stakeholders, including family, employers and society to encourage mothers, including working mothers, to exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months and continue even if complementary feeding is initiated until the child is two-years-old.

Among the recommendations are ringing in effective maternity entitlements that do not force women to choose between their families and their work and appointing of trained lactation counsellor in maternity centres/hospitals.

In addition to making workplaces breastfeeding-friendly, any obstacle for exclusive breastfeeding, especially for mothers, should be removed. Community support is also vital for women to breastfeed anytime, anywhere, so that it is normalised in public life, experts said.