

250
20938



BREAST FEEDING

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
REAU

MCH Collection
Document Number 250

14-2081

BREAST FEEDING

WHY A MOTHER SHOULD NURSE HER CHILD

Mother's milk is the normal food of all young animals, and in each species the milk is adapted to the growth needs as well as to the digestive powers of the young of that species. Unlike most young animals, the human infant is born long before the time at which he was intended to dispense with maternal nourishment, for a child does not develop teeth or the ability to take solid food until many months after birth.

An infant deprived of mother's milk, to which the partially developed digestive system is adapted, must be fed with the greatest care and intelligence. *There is nothing "just as good" as mother's milk.*

BREAST FEEDING DEPENDS LARGELY ON THE CARE THE MOTHER TAKES OF HERSELF

Before birth—Good food and care during pregnancy.

At birth—Skilled assistance.

Rest and good care during lying-in period.

After birth—Ample, nourishing diet and plenty of liquids.

Attention to constipation.

Sufficient sleep and rest.

Outdoor airing, gradually increased exercise, and recreation.

All good food can be turned into milk, but *milk in the mother's diet is the best milk producer.*

FEED THE BABY BY THE CLOCK

Breast-fed babies should be fed just as regularly as bottle-fed babies, for in this way the stomach has regular periods of rest, and proper habits are started early. A well baby does better if nursed only every three hours than when fed more frequently. Many infants do best on a four-hour interval. During the early weeks of life two night nursings, between 6 p. m. and 6 a. m., may be needed, but as soon as possible not more than one night nursing should be given. Some very vigorous babies will sleep through the entire night without nursing, but most infants require one night feeding until the end of the first year. Wake the baby during the daytime to nurse, and see that he does not sleep or play while at the breast. The average length of time for a nursing is from 10 to 20 minutes. Occasionally a vigorous baby gets enough food in less time.

WHEN TO WEAN THE BABY

Weaning should be gradual and should be completed by the end of the first year. Therefore, when the breast milk begins to fail, or by the ninth month in any case, begin part bottle feeding.

Orange juice diluted with water may be given to a nursing baby after the third month, and should be included in the diet by the end of the first year. By the tenth month a small amount of well-cooked cereal, such as farina, may be given once a day before a feeding.

BREAST MILK IS BEST FOR BABIES