

Spoon Feeds—An Alternative to Bottle Feeding

We read with interest the letter published in the *Journal* (1) The pediatrician and obstetricians in our country, always try to promote breast feeding. However, unfortunately, artificial feeding either with expressed breast milk or milk formulae is required for certain group of babies. Whether this should be by bottle or spoon/jhinuk (in West Bengal palada is known as jhinuk) is a matter of opinion. In our practice we have encountered the following disadvantages with jhinuk feeding.

Aspiration. A baby who does not have a sucking reflex, e.g., a preterm baby who is less than 34 weeks or an ill baby, will not suck on the bottle, therefore a nurse/mother will not be able to feed such a baby and will inform the doctor immediately that the baby is not sucking well. However, if mother/nurse is "jhinuk" feeding her baby, she may not realize that the baby is ill and will attempt to force feed resulting in aspiration. It is interesting to note that Nair *et al.* (1) with proper supervision did not have a single case of aspiration among more than 300 babies, who were spoon fed. However, one should realize that such a 'proper supervision' is certainly not possible in most of the maternity and nursing homes in our country and also not in nuclear families.

Infection: When the mother or nurse

feeds completely in baby with jhinuk, she dips the jhinuk completely in the bowl containing the milk, so when she picks it up, she dips her fingers in the milk, resulting in transfer of bacteria from her fingers to the milk. This may cause infection in the baby.

Over Feeding: The mothers or nurses who are expert at jhinuk feeding, quite often force feed their babies with excessive amount of milk resulting in obesity.

Psychological Satisfaction: The babies who need to be permanently artificially fed for various reasons, will not get the satisfaction of sucking, when fed with a spoon/jhinuk.

The main objection to bottle feeding is infection. In our opinion we should put more stress on teaching mothers/nurses on proper sterilization of bottles by heat or chemical means. Perhaps some device by which bottles can be sterilized by solar heat may be marketed in the future. We think that there is a need to do a controlled study in the community before deciding as to which method of artificial feeding should be advised to mothers and nurses in our country.

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REFERENCE

1. Nair PMC, Narang A, Mahajan R, Arora U. Spoon feeds-An alternative to bottle feeding. *Indian Pediatr* 1994, 31:1566-1567.