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**Major factors influencing breastfeeding rates: Mother's perception of father's attitude and milk supply.**

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**OBJECTIVE:** To determine factors influencing feeding decisions, breastfeeding and/or bottle initiation rates, as well as breastfeeding duration.

**SETTING:** A family medicine practice of a 530-bed community-based hospital in northwestern Pennsylvania.

**PARTICIPANTS:** All mothers whose infants received well-child care from birth to 1 year of age.

**OUTCOME MEASURE:** A survey of 28 simple questions was developed and mailed to 245 mothers. The survey assessed: 1) demographics, 2) prenatal and postnatal care, 3) sources of breastfeeding information, 4) timing of decision, 5) preference, 6) type of feeding selected, 7) duration of breastfeeding, 8) factors influencing decisions to breastfeed and/or to bottle-feed, and 9) factors that would have encouraged bottle-feeding mothers to breastfeed.

**RESULTS:** The breastfeeding initiation rate was 44.3%. By the time the infant was 6 months old, only 13% of these were still breastfeeding. The decision to breastfeed or to bottle-feed was most often made before pregnancy or during the first trimester. The most common reasons mothers chose breastfeeding included: 1) benefits the infant's health, 2) naturalness, and 3) emotional bonding with the infant. The most common reasons bottle-feeding was chosen included: 1) mother's perception of father's attitude, 2) uncertainty regarding the quantity of breast milk, and 3) return to work. By self-report, factors that would have encouraged bottle-feeding mothers to breastfeed included: 1) more information in prenatal class; 2) more information from TV, magazines, and books; and 3) family support.

**CONCLUSIONS:** To overcome obstacles, issues surrounding perceived barriers, such as father's attitude, quantity of milk, and time constraints, need to be discussed with each parent. To achieve the goal of 75% of breastfeeding mothers, extensive education regarding the benefits must be provided for both parents and optimally the grandmother by physicians, nurses, and the media before pregnancy or within the first trimester.

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