

ORGANIC LIVING

By
Robert Rodale

MOTHER'S MILK: THE IDEAL FOOD WE WASTE

"I felt I owed it to my baby to give him the best possible start in life."

That's how one young mother recently summed up her decision to breast-feed her second child. She is one of a small but growing minority in our sophisticated society who is defying convention by opting for the old-fashioned, natural approach to infant nutrition.

Usually among the better-educated, such women are aware of overwhelming medical evidence attesting to the superiority of mother's milk. They know that the breast-fed baby starts life with a health and emotional advantage that all the money and fancy formulas in the world can't buy.

Babies fed human milk are less likely to develop allergies than those who drink cow's milk. They are less susceptible to infections of the intestinal tract, and respiratory disorders.

Human milk also protects against staphylococcal infections and possibly influenza virus, according to distinguished researcher and pediatrician Paul Gyorgy.

In a study of newborn infants at two maternity clinics in Sweden, doctors found that babies who got very little mother's milk were more likely to suffer from life-threatening infections such as meningitis and pyelonephritis. Colostrum, the thin watery fluid secreted from the mother's breast for a few days after birth, is extremely rich in antibodies that fight infections.

Infants who are not breast-fed are also more likely to develop obesity, hardening of the arteries, and high blood pressure when they grow older, says noted British pediatrician Dr. Pamela A. Davies.

That's why it's so disturbing to learn that breast-feeding is now being abandoned on a wide scale in underdeveloped countries in the name of progress. Trying to mimic Western technology and the "good life," women in foreign lands are turning to bottled formulas as a new sort of status symbol. Especially among poorer families, the loss of nutrient-rich

mother's milk "can be disastrous to infants," the Protein Advisory Group of the United Nations now warns.

Bottle-feeding is being promoted by the "well-financed, steamroller marketing techniques" of the baby food industry, charges Derrick B. Jelliffe, professor of pediatrics and public health at UCLA. What the companies don't tell new mothers is that natural, human milk is the ideal food for human infants. It's really all the child needs for the first four to six months of life. And even after a year, it can still provide a substantial portion of nutrient intake.

Here are some additional reasons why breast-feeding makes such good sense:

1. Human milk has just the right balance of nutrients. Cow's milk is higher in protein and lower in fat, but babies have a limited capacity for utilizing protein. Their body chemistry depends more on fat.

Mother's milk also contains a more desirable ratio of calcium to phosphorus than cow's milk. As a result, the breast-fed infant is able to absorb more calcium. He is less liable to develop tetany, caused by calcium deficiency.

Human milk is also a better source of iron, needed to avoid anemia and provide for normal growth of brain cells.

2. There is no question of cleanliness. Unlike cow's milk formulas, the origin of mother's milk is never in doubt. It has not been stored in lead-leaching cans, shipped long distances, or adulterated with chemical additives.

3. Human milk is automatically kept at an ideal temperature. And it is virtually free of harmful bacteria.

4. Mother's milk is inexpensive. That is so obvious, yet often overlooked by mothers and pediatricians alike, especially in backward countries. It's estimated that a worker in Tanzania, for example, may have to spend 50 percent of his daily pay just to buy cow's milk for his baby. Even in countries with a high standard of living, inflation makes the economy of breast-feeding something to consider.

5. Breast-feeding offers emotional benefits for both mother and child.

"Nursing forces a mother to relax, to study the miracle she's holding so close," says one enthusiastic American mother. "It's an experience worth more than any small inconvenience."

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Good nutrition is vital after a child is weaned, too. For a copy of the 48-page booklet, "Your Child's Vitamins," send fifty cents to Robert Rodale, Organic Living, in care of this newspaper. Be sure to ask for the booklet by name and please allow about four weeks for delivery.

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Holsteins Classified By National Association

J. Harold Musser of Penn's Peaceful Meadow Farm in Mt. Joy, Pa., recently announced that his registered Holstein cows were classified for body conformation on June 15th.

The scoring was done by an official classifier of the Holstein-Friesian Association of America,

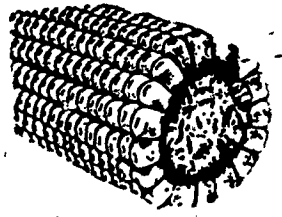
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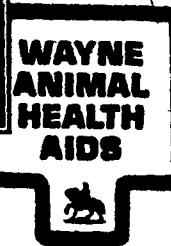
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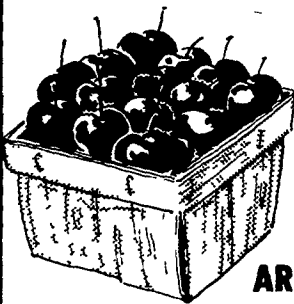
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