

CHAPTER 12: WEAK NEW BORN.

Weak child is one with birth weight less than 2.5 kgs. However, breast-feeding is a problem for new born with weight less than 1.5 kgs or delivered before 8 to 8.5 months of pregnancy.

DIFFICULTIES IN BREAST-FEEDING WEAK NEWBORNS

- ◆ Ability to suck & swallow is not fully developed.
- ◆ Baby gets tired easily as it is weak.
- ◆ Capacity of stomach is less & hence cannot take more milk. It has to be breast-fed frequently.
- ◆ Mother gets tired & frustrated especially because of night feeds.

Apart from this mother is worried about child's future & health. If baby is very premature or very weak, it requires feeding by tube positioned in stomach & kept in incubator away from mother. In such situation mother may lose self-confidence & will power. When asked to remove her milk she gets worried with thoughts like "Is my breast milk really helpful to my child?" "Will I be able to breastfeed my baby later?", "I will not be able to rear this child" etc. Lack of moral support & encouragement at this time will lead to drop in quantity of breast milk & add to problems.

Steps to be taken in such a situation:

- ✓ Explain mother & relatives that weak child requires breast milk & only mother can efficiently do job of removal of milk. Feeding it by tube does not change its quality. Tell mother that she has the maximum role rearing her weak child.
- ✓ Do not subject mother to stress by any means & raise no doubts about the adequacy of breast milk.
- ✓ Keep mother cheerful.
- ✓ Prepare mother mentally by explaining her that difficulties are expected in the breast-feeding of a weak child. This will ensure that her willpower remains intact and she can give adequate care to the child.

- ✓ To stimulate milk production milk should be removed every three hours
- ✓ All the activities of the caring the weak child, like change of clothes, changing diapers, cleaning the baby, giving it medicines etc., should be done by the mother only. This will improve her self-confidence & increase breast milk production. This is important in a joint family because somebody else may carry out all these activities.
- ✓ If child gets tired, while breast-feeding, remove milk manually, & give with cup & spoon. If baby is too weak to breast-feed or swallow milk given to it by spoon, hospitalize it and feed through a tube inserted through the nose & positioned in the stomach. If long term tube feeding is required, mother should learn that also.
- ✓ Many believe that weak child cannot digest its mother's milk. In fact, breast milk is the ideal food for weak children.
- ✓ Apart from breast milk, weak children require supplementation of calcium, phosphorus, vitamin D, E & folic acid. After 1 ½ months, it requires iron supplementation also. For all this, give medicines according to doctor's instructions.
- ✓ Mother of weak child should be encouraged by other mothers who have brought up weak babies.