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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TYPES OF FEEDING AND INCIDENCE OF NEONATAL JAUNDICE

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Background: Despite the many advantages of breast-feeding there is ample documentation of the association between breast-feeding and an increase in the risk of neonatal hyperbilirubinemia. Methods: Six hundred healthy full-term neonates were studied. Feeding types, weight loss and the incidence of jaundice during the first week of life were examined. Total serum bilirubin determinations were performed on infants with jaundice. Results: Two hundred and sixty infants were exclusively breast fed, one hundred and fifty-five were exclusively formula fed and one hundred and eighty-five were fed both formula and breast milk. Mean weight loss as a percentage of birth was 5,9% in the breast fed group, 2,3% in the artificial formula group and 3,1% in the group fed with formula and mother's milk. The total serum bilirubin concentration exceeded 12,9 mg/dl in thirty-six breast fed infants (13,8%), ten formula fed (6,4%) and sixteen fed both formula and breast milk (8,6%). The incidence of bilirubin over 15 mg/dl was 7,6%, 1,9% and 3,7% respectively. None of the infants were diagnosed with kernicterus. Conclusions: Breast fed infants have higher bilirubin levels than formula fed infants. Poor fluid and caloric intake has an important role for this finding. Appropriate support must be provided to the lactating mother so that successful breast-feeding can be established and the risk of severe hyperbilirubinemia reduced.