

Overview of breastfeeding in Turkey in consideration of World Breastfeeding Week

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We celebrated “World Breastfeeding Week” between August 1st and August 7th. World breastfeeding week is celebrated every year between August 1st and August 7th in the memory of the “Innocenti Declaration” signed in 1990 to encourage breastfeeding worldwide and enable improvement in infant nutrition.

According to estimates of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 1.3 million children die annually because of the lack of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life. Currently, only 43% of babies aged below six months are being breastfed worldwide. The probability of mortality is 14-fold higher in babies who have never been breastfed compared with babies who are exclusively breastfed (1).

The new report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF states that approximately three out of five babies are not breastfed in the first few hours following delivery and this increases the risk of mortality and morbidity in babies and decreases the possibility of continuing breastfeeding subsequently. Most of these babies are born in low- and middle-income countries (2).

In our country, a significant change did not occur in the rates of early initiation of breastfeeding between the years of 2003 and 2013, and this rate which was 52.3%, even reduced to 49.9% (3).

The article titled “Breastfeeding problems and interventions performed on problems: Systematic review based on studies made in Turkey” included in this issue

of our journal shows that the leading causes of problems related to breastfeeding are preventable causes, which can be intervened, including excessive milk release (29.8%), erythema and temperature change in the nipples (28.8%), fissure/wound/bleeding in the nipples (26.1%), and the lack of an appropriate environment for breastfeeding outside the home (20.4%).

According to these results, the leading prevention to be taken in order to extend and maintain breastfeeding in our country include teaching breastfeeding techniques and breast care to mothers by giving accurate and adequate lactation counseling during pregnancy and in the postnatal period, and increasing environments appropriate for nursing or milking in the community.

Finally, I wish you all the best by reminding you of the statement of the President of the WHO Dr. Tedros Adhanom: “Breastfeeding gives babies the best possible start in life.”

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References

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