



## NURSES' AND DIETITIANS' ROLE IN PROMOTING BREASTFEEDING AND INFANT NUTRITION

Bader Nasser Ghathith Almutairi <sup>1\*</sup>, NAIF ABDULLAH M ALMUTAIRI <sup>2</sup>, FATIMAH FAWAZ ABDULLAH ALSHAMMARI <sup>3</sup>, Fahad Mohammed Alonazi <sup>4</sup>, Amnah sahaban binThamir Alrashdi <sup>5</sup>, Ghadeer Hansheil Abdullah Alrashedy <sup>6</sup>, Reem Saud Sughayyir Aldhafeeri <sup>7</sup>, HIND SALMAN GHANEM ALRASHIDI <sup>8</sup>, Ibrahim mfareh O Alreshidi <sup>9</sup>, Abdullah Rashed Alrashidi <sup>10</sup>

### Abstract:

This review article explores the crucial role of nurses in promoting breastfeeding and infant nutrition. Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the optimal way to nourish infants, providing numerous health benefits for both the baby and the mother. Nurses play a vital role in supporting and educating mothers on the importance of breastfeeding, assisting them in overcoming challenges, and ensuring successful breastfeeding initiation and continuation. Additionally, nurses are instrumental in promoting proper infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding, advocating for healthy eating habits and nutritional guidelines that support optimal growth and development in infants. This review examines the various ways in which nurses contribute to promoting breastfeeding and optimal infant nutrition, including through education, counseling, and support services. Furthermore, the article discusses the challenges and barriers that nurses may face in fulfilling this role and suggests strategies to enhance their effectiveness in promoting breastfeeding and infant nutrition. By highlighting the significant impact that nurses can have on infant health outcomes through their support and advocacy for breastfeeding and proper nutrition, this review emphasizes the importance of empowering nurses with the knowledge and resources necessary to promote optimal infant feeding practices.

**Keywords:** Breastfeeding, Infant nutrition, Nurses, Health promotion, Maternal education, Breastfeeding support.

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<sup>1\*</sup>Specialist in Food and Nutrition Services, Central Hospital, Hafer ALbatin, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup>Food & Nutrition Specialist, Hafr Al-Batin Central Hospital, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>3</sup>CLINICAL DIETITIAN, Hail General Hospital, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>4</sup>Dietitian, King Khaled Hospital, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>5</sup>Nursing specialist, Al-Nimarah Wal-Mis'ar Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>6</sup>Nursing specialist, Al-Hulaifah Al-Sufila Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>7</sup>Nursing technician, Al-Rawdah Healthcare Center, Hafr Al-Batin, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>8</sup>Nursing technician, Al-Nimarah Wal-Mis'ar Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>9</sup>Nursing technician, Al-Hulaifah Al-Sufila Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>10</sup>Nursing technician, Feidat Uthqub Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia.

**\*Corresponding Author:** Bader Nasser Ghathith Almutairi

\*Specialist in Food and Nutrition Services, Central Hospital, Hafer ALbatin, Saudi Arabia.

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**Introduction:**

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the optimal form of nutrition for infants, providing numerous health benefits for both the baby and the mother. As such, nurses play a crucial role in promoting breastfeeding and infant nutrition [1]. Breastfeeding is recommended by major health organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Breast milk is uniquely tailored to meet the nutritional needs of infants, containing the perfect balance of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. In addition, breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from infections and diseases, reducing the risk of allergies, asthma, obesity, and other health problems later in life [2].

Despite the numerous benefits of breastfeeding, many mothers face challenges when it comes to breastfeeding their infants. These challenges can include difficulties with latching, low milk supply, pain or discomfort while breastfeeding, and lack of support from healthcare providers, family members, and society at large. This is where nurses play a crucial role in supporting breastfeeding mothers and helping them overcome these challenges [3].

Nurses are often the first point of contact for new mothers in healthcare settings, such as hospitals, clinics, and community health centers. They play a key role in providing education and support to breastfeeding mothers, helping them to establish and maintain successful breastfeeding relationships with their infants. Nurses can provide guidance on proper breastfeeding techniques, positioning, and latch, as well as information on the benefits of breastfeeding and how to overcome common breastfeeding challenges [4].

In addition to providing education and support, nurses can also advocate for breastfeeding-friendly policies and practices within healthcare settings. This can include promoting skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth, rooming-in with the baby, and avoiding unnecessary supplementation with formula. Nurses can also help create breastfeeding-friendly environments by ensuring that mothers have access to private, comfortable spaces for breastfeeding or pumping breast milk, as well as providing breastfeeding-friendly policies and practices within healthcare settings [5].

Furthermore, nurses can play a role in promoting breastfeeding in the community through outreach programs, support groups, and public health campaigns. By raising awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and providing support to

breastfeeding mothers, nurses can help increase breastfeeding rates and improve infant nutrition in their communities [6].

**Nurses as Advocates for Breastfeeding:**

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the optimal way to nourish infants, providing numerous health benefits for both the baby and the mother. However, despite the well-documented advantages of breastfeeding, many women face barriers and challenges when it comes to initiating and sustaining breastfeeding. This is where nurses play a crucial role as advocates for breastfeeding, supporting and empowering mothers to make informed decisions about their infant feeding choices [7].

Nurses are on the front lines of patient care, often serving as the first point of contact for new mothers in the hospital setting. As such, they have a unique opportunity to educate and support women in their breastfeeding journey. Nurses can provide evidence-based information on the benefits of breastfeeding, including its role in promoting infant health and bonding, as well as its long-term benefits for both mother and child [7].

In addition to providing education, nurses can also offer practical support to help mothers overcome common breastfeeding challenges. This may include assisting with proper latch and positioning, troubleshooting issues such as low milk supply or nipple pain, and connecting mothers with lactation consultants or support groups for additional help. By addressing these barriers early on, nurses can help increase the likelihood of successful breastfeeding outcomes [8].

Furthermore, nurses can advocate for breastfeeding-friendly policies and practices within healthcare settings. This may involve promoting skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth, encouraging rooming-in to facilitate breastfeeding on demand, and ensuring that mothers have access to lactation support services both during their hospital stay and after discharge. By creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding, nurses can help empower mothers to make informed choices that align with their breastfeeding goals [9].

Beyond the hospital setting, nurses can also advocate for breastfeeding at the community level. This may involve participating in breastfeeding awareness campaigns, lobbying for legislation that supports breastfeeding rights, and collaborating with local organizations to promote breastfeeding-friendly practices in public spaces. By raising awareness about the importance of breastfeeding and advocating for supportive policies, nurses can

help create a culture that values and prioritizes breastfeeding as the norm for infant feeding [10]. Nurses play a vital role as advocates for breastfeeding, supporting and empowering mothers to make informed decisions about infant feeding. By providing education, practical support, and advocacy at both the individual and community level, nurses can help overcome barriers to breastfeeding and promote the health and well-being of mothers and infants. As champions for breastfeeding, nurses have the power to make a positive impact on the lives of families and contribute to the overall health of society [11].

### **Role of Nurses in Breastfeeding Education and Counseling:**

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the best form of nutrition for infants, providing numerous health benefits for both the baby and the mother. It is recommended by major health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) as the optimal way to feed a baby for the first six months of life. However, despite the many benefits of breastfeeding, many mothers face challenges and obstacles when it comes to successfully breastfeeding their babies [12].

This is where the role of nurses in breastfeeding education and counseling becomes crucial. Nurses play a vital role in promoting and supporting breastfeeding among new mothers, providing them with the information, guidance, and encouragement they need to successfully breastfeed their babies [12].

One of the key roles of nurses in breastfeeding education is to provide mothers with accurate and up-to-date information about the benefits of breastfeeding, as well as the techniques and practices that can help them succeed. Nurses can help mothers understand the importance of breastfeeding for both the baby and the mother, including its role in promoting bonding, boosting the baby's immune system, and reducing the risk of certain health conditions for both mother and baby [13].

In addition to providing information, nurses also play a crucial role in helping mothers overcome any challenges or obstacles they may face when it comes to breastfeeding. This can include providing guidance on proper latching techniques, addressing concerns about milk supply, and offering support and encouragement during the early days and weeks of breastfeeding [13].

Nurses can also help mothers navigate any issues that may arise during breastfeeding, such as sore nipples, engorgement, or mastitis. By providing

practical advice and support, nurses can help mothers overcome these challenges and continue breastfeeding successfully [14].

Furthermore, nurses can also play a key role in counseling mothers on the importance of breastfeeding on demand, as well as the benefits of skin-to-skin contact and rooming-in with the baby. By promoting these practices, nurses can help mothers establish a strong breastfeeding relationship with their babies from the very beginning [14].

Overall, the role of nurses in breastfeeding education and counseling is essential in promoting and supporting breastfeeding among new mothers. By providing accurate information, practical guidance, and emotional support, nurses can help mothers overcome challenges and obstacles, and successfully breastfeed their babies. Nurses play a crucial role in empowering mothers to make informed decisions about breastfeeding, and in helping them establish a strong and positive breastfeeding relationship with their babies [15].

### **Supporting Mothers in Overcoming Breastfeeding Challenges:**

Breastfeeding is a natural and beneficial way to nourish a baby, providing essential nutrients and antibodies that help protect against illness and promote healthy development. However, many mothers face challenges when it comes to breastfeeding, which can lead to frustration, stress, and feelings of inadequacy. It is important to provide support and resources to help mothers overcome these challenges and successfully breastfeed their babies [16].

One common challenge that mothers face when breastfeeding is difficulty with latching. Proper latch is essential for effective milk transfer and preventing nipple pain and damage. Mothers may struggle with getting their baby to latch correctly, leading to frustration and discomfort. In these cases, it is important for mothers to seek support from a lactation consultant or healthcare provider who can offer guidance and assistance. Lactation consultants are trained professionals who can help mothers with latching techniques, positioning, and troubleshooting any issues that may arise [16].

Another challenge that mothers may encounter is low milk supply. Some mothers may worry that they are not producing enough milk to meet their baby's needs, leading to feelings of inadequacy and stress. It is important for mothers to understand that low milk supply is a common concern and can often be addressed with proper support and guidance. Lactation consultants can provide advice on increasing milk supply through techniques such as frequent nursing, pumping, and proper nutrition.

They can also help mothers identify any underlying issues that may be contributing to low milk supply, such as latch problems or hormonal imbalances [17].

Engorgement and mastitis are two other common challenges that mothers may face when breastfeeding. Engorgement occurs when the breasts become overly full and uncomfortable, often due to a build-up of milk. Mastitis is a painful inflammation of the breast tissue, usually caused by a bacterial infection. Both of these conditions can be distressing for mothers and may interfere with breastfeeding. It is important for mothers to seek help from a healthcare provider if they experience symptoms of engorgement or mastitis, as these conditions may require medical treatment [18].

In addition to physical challenges, mothers may also face emotional challenges when breastfeeding. Some mothers may feel overwhelmed by the demands of breastfeeding, especially in the early weeks when feedings are frequent and sleep is limited. Others may struggle with feelings of guilt or inadequacy if they encounter difficulties with breastfeeding. It is important for mothers to seek support from their partners, family members, and healthcare providers during this time. Support groups and online forums can also provide a valuable source of encouragement and advice for mothers who are struggling with breastfeeding [19].

Overall, supporting mothers in overcoming breastfeeding challenges is essential for promoting the health and well-being of both mother and baby. By providing access to lactation consultants, healthcare providers, and support groups, we can help mothers navigate the challenges of breastfeeding and achieve success in this important aspect of infant care. Breastfeeding is a rewarding and beneficial experience for both mother and baby, and with the right support, mothers can overcome any challenges they may face and enjoy the many benefits that breastfeeding has to offer [20].

### **Promoting Optimal Infant Nutrition Beyond Breastfeeding:**

Infant nutrition is a critical aspect of a child's development, as it lays the foundation for their growth and overall health. While breastfeeding is often considered the gold standard for infant nutrition, there are situations where it may not be possible or feasible for various reasons. In such cases, it is important to promote optimal infant nutrition through alternative feeding methods that provide the necessary nutrients for the baby's growth and development [21].

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the best way to provide infants with the essential nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Breast milk is rich in antibodies, enzymes, and other bioactive compounds that protect infants from infections and diseases. It also contains the perfect balance of nutrients, such as protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals, that are crucial for an infant's growth and development [22].

However, despite the numerous benefits of breastfeeding, there are situations where it may not be possible or feasible for mothers to breastfeed their infants. Some mothers may have medical conditions that prevent them from breastfeeding, while others may face challenges such as low milk supply, latch issues, or difficulty with breastfeeding techniques. In such cases, it is important to explore alternative feeding methods to ensure that infants receive the nutrition they need to thrive [23].

There are several options available to promote optimal infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding. One common alternative is formula feeding, where infants are fed with commercially prepared infant formula that is designed to mimic the composition of breast milk. Infant formula is a suitable alternative for infants who are unable to breastfeed or for mothers who choose not to breastfeed. It provides all the essential nutrients that infants need for healthy growth and development, including protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals [24].

Another option for promoting optimal infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding is donor milk. Donor milk is breast milk that is donated by lactating mothers and processed to ensure its safety and quality. Donor milk is often used in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) to provide preterm infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Donor milk is also used in cases where mothers are unable to breastfeed their infants but still wish to provide them with the benefits of breast milk [25].

In addition to formula feeding and donor milk, there are other options available to promote optimal infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding. These include fortified infant cereals, baby food purees, and homemade baby food made from fresh fruits and vegetables. These options can provide infants with a variety of nutrients that are essential for their growth and development, such as iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C [26].

Promoting optimal infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding is essential to ensure that infants receive the nutrients they need for healthy growth



and development. While breastfeeding is the preferred method of infant feeding, there are situations where it may not be possible or feasible. In such cases, it is important to explore alternative feeding methods, such as formula feeding, donor milk, and fortified infant cereals, to provide infants with the essential nutrients they need to thrive. By promoting optimal infant nutrition beyond breastfeeding, we can help ensure that all infants have the best start in life [27].

### **Addressing Barriers to Effective Nursing Support:**

Nursing support plays a crucial role in providing quality healthcare to patients. Nurses are often the first point of contact for patients and their families, and they play a key role in ensuring that patients receive the care and attention they need. However, there are several barriers that can hinder the effectiveness of nursing support, ultimately impacting patient outcomes [28].

One of the most significant barriers to effective nursing support is a lack of staffing. Nursing shortages are a widespread issue in healthcare, with many facilities struggling to recruit and retain qualified nurses. When nursing staff are overworked and understaffed, they may not have enough time to provide the level of care and attention that patients require. This can lead to increased stress and burnout among nurses, as well as compromised patient safety and satisfaction [29].

To address this barrier, healthcare facilities must prioritize adequate staffing levels and invest in recruiting and retaining qualified nurses. This may involve offering competitive salaries and benefits, providing opportunities for professional development and advancement, and creating a positive work environment that supports the well-being of nursing staff. By ensuring that nursing teams are adequately staffed and supported, facilities can improve the quality of care they provide to patients [30].

Another barrier to effective nursing support is a lack of resources and technology. Nurses rely on a variety of tools and resources to provide quality care, from medical equipment and supplies to electronic health records and communication systems. When these resources are outdated, inadequate, or inaccessible, nurses may struggle to deliver care efficiently and effectively. This can lead to delays in treatment, errors in documentation, and overall dissatisfaction among patients and staff [29].

To address this barrier, healthcare facilities must invest in modern technology and resources that support nursing practice. This may involve

implementing electronic health record systems that streamline documentation and communication, providing nurses with access to up-to-date medical equipment and supplies, and offering training and support to help nurses effectively utilize these resources. By equipping nurses with the tools they need to do their jobs effectively, facilities can improve the quality of care they provide to patients [31].

In addition to staffing and resources, another barrier to effective nursing support is communication and collaboration. Nurses work closely with a variety of healthcare professionals, including physicians, therapists, and social workers, to coordinate care for patients. When communication breaks down or collaboration is lacking, patients may experience delays in treatment, conflicting care plans, and gaps in their care [30].

To address this barrier, healthcare facilities must prioritize effective communication and collaboration among healthcare teams. This may involve implementing regular team meetings and huddles to discuss patient care, utilizing communication tools such as secure messaging platforms and electronic health records, and fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect among healthcare professionals. By promoting open communication and collaboration, facilities can improve the coordination of care and ultimately enhance patient outcomes [32].

Addressing barriers to effective nursing support is essential for improving the quality of care provided to patients. By prioritizing adequate staffing levels, investing in modern technology and resources, and promoting effective communication and collaboration among healthcare teams, facilities can overcome these barriers and support nurses in delivering high-quality care to patients. Ultimately, by addressing these barriers, healthcare facilities can improve patient outcomes, enhance patient satisfaction, and create a positive work environment for nursing staff [33].

### **Strategies to Enhance Nurses' Impact on Infant Feeding Practices:**

Infant feeding practices play a crucial role in the overall health and development of newborns. As primary caregivers, nurses have a significant impact on promoting and supporting optimal feeding practices for infants. However, with the evolving landscape of healthcare and the increasing complexity of infant feeding choices, it is essential for nurses to employ effective strategies to enhance their impact on infant feeding practices [34].

One of the key strategies for nurses to enhance their impact on infant feeding practices is through education. Nurses should stay up-to-date on the latest evidence-based practices and guidelines related to infant feeding. This includes understanding the benefits of breastfeeding, the risks of formula feeding, and the importance of introducing solid foods at the appropriate time. By educating themselves on these topics, nurses can provide accurate information and guidance to parents, helping them make informed decisions about their infant's feeding [34].

In addition to educating themselves, nurses should also prioritize education for parents. This can be done through one-on-one counseling sessions, group classes, or educational materials. By providing parents with information on the benefits of breastfeeding, proper feeding techniques, and strategies for overcoming common breastfeeding challenges, nurses can empower parents to make informed decisions about their infant's feeding. Additionally, nurses can address any misconceptions or concerns that parents may have about breastfeeding, helping to increase their confidence and willingness to breastfeed [35].

Another strategy for enhancing nurses' impact on infant feeding practices is through collaboration with other healthcare professionals. Nurses should work closely with lactation consultants, pediatricians, and dietitians to provide comprehensive care for infants and their families. By collaborating with other professionals, nurses can ensure that infants receive the support and guidance they need to thrive. This may include referrals to lactation consultants for breastfeeding support, consultations with pediatricians for medical issues related to feeding, or guidance from dietitians on proper nutrition for infants [36].

Furthermore, nurses can enhance their impact on infant feeding practices by creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers. This includes providing private spaces for breastfeeding, offering breastfeeding-friendly policies in the workplace, and promoting a culture that values and supports breastfeeding. By creating a supportive environment, nurses can help to normalize breastfeeding and make it easier for mothers to breastfeed their infants [37].

Lastly, nurses can enhance their impact on infant feeding practices by advocating for policies and practices that support breastfeeding. This may include advocating for paid maternity leave, breastfeeding-friendly workplaces, and access to lactation support services. By advocating for these policies, nurses can help to create a more

supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers and infants, ultimately improving infant feeding practices [38].

Nurses play a critical role in promoting and supporting optimal infant feeding practices. By employing effective strategies such as education, collaboration, creating a supportive environment, and advocating for breastfeeding-friendly policies, nurses can enhance their impact on infant feeding practices and improve the health and well-being of infants and their families. It is essential for nurses to prioritize infant feeding practices and work towards creating a culture that values and supports breastfeeding [39].

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, nurses play a vital role in promoting breastfeeding and infant nutrition. By providing education, support, and advocacy to breastfeeding mothers, nurses can help ensure that infants receive the best possible start in life. Through their efforts, nurses can help improve the health and well-being of both infants and mothers, and contribute to a healthier future for generations to come.

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