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## Key nutrition issues

### Session 2 : Observing and assessing a breastfeed

Day : 1

Time : 1 hour

#### Purpose

To review how to observe and assess a breastfeed, as this is a crucial diagnostic tool for ASHAs and necessary to support successful breastfeeding

#### Objectives

At the end of the session ASHAs will be able to:

1. Explain 3 things to look for when observing a breastfeed
2. Demonstrate how to observe a breast feed in order to assess problems, if any

#### Materials

- Flip chart papers or black board
- Markers or chalk
- HBNCC flipchart

#### Preparation

- Arrange to have a breastfeeding mother attend the session.
- Ensure that participants have IMNCI and HBNC flipcharts

#### Training methods :

##### Presentation and Discussion (30 min)

##### Instruction for trainers:

1. Explain that although observing a breastfeed was discussed in previous workshops, we will now be reviewing what to look for and practice how to do it because this is a very important skill.
2. Explain that before helping a mother in breastfeeding (as well as with complementary feeding), it is very important to observe how she is feeding her baby. By observing, ASHAs can assess if the baby is in a supportive position and if it is suckling correctly. If it is not, ASHAs can diagnose what is going wrong and help the mother to rectify the problem and improve breastfeeding.
3. Make two columns on the board or white paper. In one column write "Breastfeeding going well" and the other 'Possible difficulties' as in the box below.
4. Ask participants to recollect their own experiences and what they learnt during the past training sessions. Ask how they can tell if a breastfeeding is going well? Encourage participation. Write their answers down.
5. Ask about signs of 'possible difficulties'. Write the answers in the right hand column. At the end of the exercise, if anything has been left out from the box below, complete the table.

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### **1. Breastfeeding is going well**

#### **How does the mother hold her baby?**

Mother is holding baby close, facing breast, with baby's ear, shoulder and buttocks in a straight line.

Mother is holding her whole breast

Mother is sitting or lying down straight

Baby's mouth is placed below the breast

#### **Does the baby look well attached to the breast?**

Mouth is wide open

Baby's mouth is full with its mother's breast

Areola is inside the baby's mouth

#### **What is the condition of the mother's breasts?**

How does breastfeeding feel to the mother?

Mother is feeling happy.

### **2. Possible difficulties**

Baby's neck is twisted

Mother is holding her breast between two fingers

Mother is bent towards her baby

Baby's mouth is placed above the breast

Mouth is not wide open

Baby is sucking only at the nipple

Areola is outside baby's mouth

Very full or engorged breasts (give extra feed to empty out the breasts) Cracked nipples (adjust position and latch-on)

Mother finds breastfeeding to be painful

Mother has small or inverted nipples or very long nipples (refer to training guidelines)

Mother has either hard or soft breasts

There is redness or lumps in the breast

6. Have the participants look at the following illustrations of the two breastfeeding mothers. Ask them what they are observing?

*Possible answers:*

*In situation 1 mother and baby are feeding well; baby is well positioned: Mother is holding the baby close, & the baby is facing the breast, with its ears, shoulders and buttocks in a straight line.*

*In situation 2 there is difficulty. Baby not supported well, mother holding breast with two fingers which may hamper latch-on, mother is distracted and does not look happy. **This mother and baby will need help and advice on appropriate positioning of child at breast during breastfeeding.***

7. Explain that appropriate positioning of mother-child and proper latch-on of child at breast are key to successful breastfeeding. Explain how the positioning of a mother's hand on her breast can either support proper latch-on (see illustration on left side below) or hinder proper latch-on (illustration on right).

Offer the baby the whole breast and not just the nipple for successful breastfeeding.

8. Refer trainees to the Breastfeeding Observation Tips they received during an earlier session on breastfeeding problems (see below). Have them review the main points when observing a breastfeed,

**Content Box :**

**Breastfeeding Observation Tips**

**Sign breastfeeding going well**

Mother's body relaxed, comfortable, confident  
Eye contact with baby, touching

Baby's mouth well attached; covering most of areola, opened wide, lower lip turned outwards

Suckling well; deep sucks, bursts with pauses

Cheeks round, swallowing heard or seen

Baby calm and alert at breast, stays attached

Mother may feel uterus cramping, some may be leaking (showing milk is flowing)  
After feed, breasts soft, nipples protruding

**Sign of possible difficulties**

Mother tense, leans over baby  
Not much eye contact or touching

Mouth not opened wide, not covering areola; lips only around the nipple

Rapid sucks, cheeks tense or sucked in smacking or clicking sounds

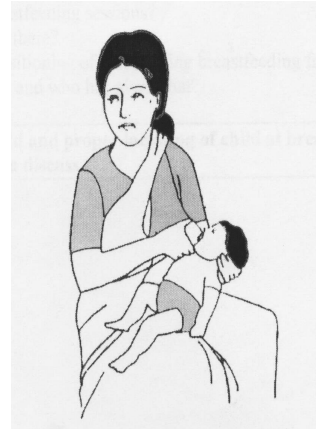
Baby restless or crying, slips off

Mother not feeling cramping, no leaking milk (milk not flowing) breast.  
After feed, breasts full or engorged, nipples may be red, cracked, flat or inverted.

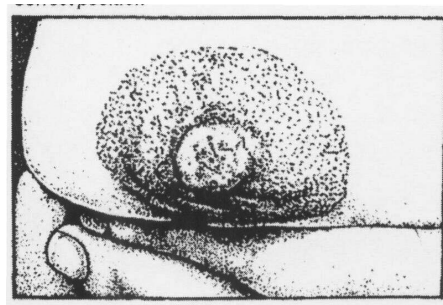
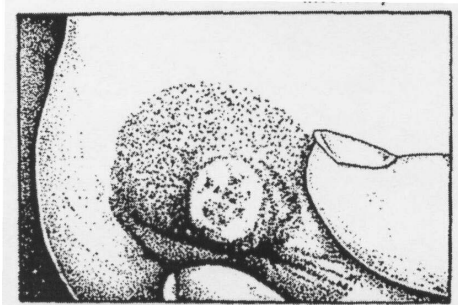
Adapted from WHO-UNICEF, *Breastfeeding Counseling: A Training Course*



**Correct position for breastfeeding**



**Incorrect position for breastfeeding**



**How does the mother hold her breast**

9. Explain that how the mother is feeling, as well as her attitude and mood are all important clues to understand what may be causing the problem.

**How does the mother feel about her breastfeeding experience?**

Does the mother feel any pain during breastfeeding? *If yes, observe latch-on and advise.*

Is the baby comfortable while breastfeeding? *If not, assist with positioning*

Are the breasts engorged? *If yes, encourage mother to breastfeed more often to empty out the breasts. Mother will have to express some milk out of her breasts, as latching on is difficult with very full breasts – she may need help to do this.*

Is the mother happy or sad & tense? *(If the mother is sad, try and encourage her. Explain to her that breastfeeding releases hormones which will help to relax her.)*

**Appropriate positioning of mother and baby, and correct attachment or latch-on of the baby are key factors for successful breastfeeding**

**Demonstration (40 min) Observing and assessing a breastfeed**

1. Trainer tries to arrange 2-3 lactating mothers to come to the training session. If this is not possible, a role play exercise may be arranged instead.
2. Based on the number of lactating mothers available, divide the trainees into groups. Each mother will be observed by a number of ASHAs.
3. While observing the breastfeed, the ASHAs must refer to “Breastfeeding Tips” handout given to them in the previous breastfeeding session.
4. Have the ASHAs observe the breastfeed. Point out the signs of good positioning, proper latch-on, etc.

**Summary (10 min)**

- Ask trainees to state what to look for when observing and assessing a breastfeed (*position of baby, latch on, attitude of mother, breast empty at the end of feeding, etc.*)

**Evaluation of the session**

Objectives	Assessment Method
Explain 3 things to look for when observing a breastfeed	Questions and answers
Demonstrate how to observe a breast feed in order to assess problems, if any	Demonstration in class or role plays