

Breastfeeding Survey 2019

Background

The Department of Health (DH) all along monitors the trend of local breastfeeding rates. Apart from collecting monthly reports of breastfeeding rate from hospitals with maternity units, breastfeeding survey is conducted regularly in its Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHC), which cover about 90% of all babies born in Hong Kong. The breastfeeding survey was first conducted annually since 1998, and then biennially from 2002 onwards.

Objective

The breastfeeding survey aims to assess breastfeeding rates in the first year of life among babies born in the year of 2018, so as to monitor the local trend.

Methodology

It is a cross-sectional survey through convenience sampling. The sample includes all one-year-old babies brought by their parents or main carers to attend the MCHC within the data collection period. Longitudinal data on the baby's feeding practices at 1 month, 2 months, 4 months and 6 months are transcribed from the child health record, and at 12 months through directly enquiring the parent or the carer. All data are recorded on a standardised data collection sheet by nurses. To facilitate better understanding on baby feeding practices, the age of introduction of complementary foods is also collected. A baby's breastfeeding status is categorised according to the WHO's latest standard.¹

All breastfeeding surveys were conducted in May to July of the year to reduce seasonal variations of the findings and improve comparability. This year, the data collection was conducted at 31 MCHCs from 20 May to 6 June 2019.

¹ Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework. Operational Guidance For Tracking Progress in Meeting Targets for 2025. World Health Organization. Dec 2017.

Results

Ever breastfeeding rate at hospital discharge:

According to the reports from all local hospitals with maternity units², a total of 53711 babies was born in 2018. The **ever breastfeeding rates at hospital discharge** of babies born in 2018 was 87.5%.

Breastfeeding survey:

A total of 2843 babies who were born in 2018 attended the routine 12-month MCHC immunisation visit within the data collection period. Among them, 2218 babies completed the Survey.³ The response rate was 78.0%.

The **breastfeeding rates (BF rates)** of babies born in 2018 at 1, 2, 4, 6 and 12 months were 76.6%, 66.4%, 55.7%, 46.5% and 26.1% respectively. Whereas, the **exclusive breastfeeding rates (EBF rates)** of babies born in 2018 at 1, 2, 4 and 6 months were 32.6%, 31.5%, 29.1% and 26.3 % respectively.

WHO recommended that babies should be breastfed exclusively in the first 6 months. At around 6 months of age, complementary food should be introduced in their diet, with continued breastfeeding to 2 years old or above. Majority of the surveyed babies with exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months (i.e. fed with breastmilk without using any formula milk) had started complementary food.

The BF rates and EBF rates of babies born in 2018 were compared to those of babies born in 2014 and 2016. (See table 1)

Family Health Service,
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² Data were collected from 19 hospitals with maternity units in Hong Kong, including 8 public hospitals under the Hospital Authority and 11 private hospitals.

³ Those babies whose feeding information could not be obtained from the mother and carer nor the clinical records were not included in the BF Survey.

Table 1: Breastfeeding rates of babies born in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

		Year of birth		
		2014	2016	2018
Ever breastfeeding rate at hospital discharge		86.4% (N=62295)	86.8% (N=60853)	87.5% (N=53711)
Breastfeeding Surveys		2014	2016	2018
		N=1615 (95%CI)	N=2614 (95%CI)	N=2218 (95%CI)
Breastfeeding rate^a	At 1 month	73.1% (70.9-75.3%)	78.2% (76.6-79.8%)	76.6% (74.8-78.4%)
	At 2 month	61.0% (58.6-63.4%)	67.0% (65.2-68.8%)	66.4% (64.4-68.4%)
	At 4 month	50.3% (47.8-52.7%)	55.5% (53.6-57.4%)	55.7% (53.6-57.7%)
	At 6 month	40.9% (38.5-43.4%)	47.0% (45.1-48.9%)	46.5% (44.4-48.6%)
	At 12 month	25.1% (23.0-27.3%)	28.2% (26.5-29.9%)	26.1% (24.3-27.9%)
Exclusive breastfeeding rate^b	At 1 month	30.8% (28.5-33.1%)	33.8% (32-35.6%)	32.6% (30.6-34.5%)
	At 2 month	30.4% (28.2-32.7%)	33.4% (31.6-35.2%)	31.5% (29.6-33.4%)
	At 4 month	26.6% (24.5-28.9%)	30.7% (28.9-32.4%)	29.1% (27.2-31.0%)
	At 6 month ^c	25.5% (23.4-27.7%)	27.9% (26.2-29.7%)	26.3% (24.5-28.1%)

Note:

^a Breastfeeding (BF) rate refers to any form of breastfeeding, including babies exclusively breastfed as well as those breastfed supplemented by formula milk or solid food.

^b Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rate means the baby is feeding on breastmilk only (either directly from breast or indirectly from expressed breastmilk).

^c Exclusive breastfeeding rate at 6 months means the baby is feeding on breastmilk without using any formula milk, and they may or may not have started complementary food.