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**MOTHERS' PRACTICES: THE TIME OF STOPPING  
BREASTFEEDING, REASONS FOR STOPPING BREASTFEEDING  
AND METHODS WHICH USED IN THIS PERIOD**

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**Abstract**

This study was aimed to determine the time of stopping breastfeeding, reasons for stopping breastfeeding and methods which mothers' used during this period. The study was completed by totally 206 mothers. Data were collected by a questionnaire and in the evaluation of the data percentage calculations have been used. It is determined that 34 % of mothers stopped breastfeeding when their babies were six months. Mothers' main reason for stopping breastfeeding was "lack of milk" (42.7 %). A total of 30.1 percent of the mothers joined to this study expressed that they put away their babies from the breast with different applications to the nipple.

**Key words:** Breastfeeding, stopping breastfeeding, mothers' breastfeeding practices.

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## Introduction

Breastfeeding is like an extension of common life which to be created during pregnancy between mother and her baby. A baby takes milk from his/her mother and mother gives milk to her baby. This action is one of the basic human right for mother and baby. Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for the infant<sup>1-3</sup>. Breast feeding is a perfect practice because of its countless benefits that are reflected on the infant and mother.

Breastfeeding facilitates early mother-infant attachment and has also been related to possible enhancement of cognitive development<sup>4-7</sup>. Breast milk provides immunologic protection against infection and may decrease the frequency of chronic illnesses developed later in life.<sup>8,9</sup> The World Health Organization has suggested that all babies should be fed with a mother's milk in the first six months and suckling should be supported with proper nutriment after six months until his/her two years<sup>10-12</sup>.

The most pleasure of a baby is to suckle since she/he was born. Mother's breast not only comforts, calms but also grows up to the baby. The breast is the greatest happiness for the baby. It is difficult for a baby to leave from mother's breast. The baby has to adapt to be fed with different nutriment any more.<sup>2-5,13-15</sup>

To pass to the supplement nutriment is the first step of stopping breastfeeding. Stopping breastfeeding is not an ordinary attitude consists of changing nutriment or passing from breast to feeding bottle. This period is rather complicated that it is critical period on aspects of mother and her baby. Mother and her baby may face to face with different difficulties during stopping breastfeeding<sup>2,13-15</sup>.

Most of the previous reports indicated that the reasons for stopping breastfeeding are lack of milk and return to work or school. Other reasons are infants'/mothers' health problems, pregnancy and breast problems<sup>16-19</sup>.

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This descriptive study was conducted to determine the time of stopping breastfeeding, the reasons for stopping breastfeeding and methods which used to put away the baby from the breast during this period .

### **Methods**

The population of this descriptive study was consisted of 211 mothers who have 24-month-children and prefer to feed their children with breast milk and registered in a primary health care center in Erzurum which is a city in the east of Turkey. All of the mothers who have 24-month old children were enrolled into the study. Five of mothers cannot be reached because of their different reasons. The study was completed by totally 206 mothers. Data were collected by a structured questionnaire included totally 15 items which were prepared by researchers. Mothers were visited in their houses taking their addresses from the health center. Data were collected by the face to face interview from mothers. The aim of the study was explained to mothers and their willingness were noticed. The questionnaire included the socio-demographic characteristics of the mother, as well as information on breastfeeding practices. In the evaluation of the data percentage calculations have been used.

### **Results**

A total of 103 women with one child <24 completed months of age were enrolled in the study .Their age at delivery ranged from 20 to 39 years (41.7 % of mothers were in the group of 25 to 29 age). Approximately 41.7% had literate and graduated from primary school, and only 17.5% had reached university level. (Table I).

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**Table I.** Demographic Characteristics of Mothers (n= 206)

Mother's age	n	%
20 to 24	34	16.6
25 to 29	86	41.7
30 to 34	54	26.2
35 to 39	32	15.5
Mother's education		
Not literate	36	17.5
Literate/graduate from primary school	86	41.7
Graduate from secondary /high school	48	23.3
Graduate from university	36	17.5

In this research, approximately 34% of mothers continued breast feeding up to 6 month . The proportion of mothers who suckled their babies between 6-12 months was 23.3%. The ratio of mothers who breastfed their children during 13-18 months was 26.2% and 19-24 months was 16.5 % (Table II).

**Table II.** The Times of Stopping Breastfeeding (n= 206 )

Variable	n	%
6 <sup>th</sup> month	70	34.0
6 to 12 months	48	23.3
13 to 18 months	54	26.2
19 to 24 months	34	16.5

When mothers were asked for the main reason for stopping breastfeeding, "lack of milk" was the most frequent answer (42.7 %), followed by "grow up of child" (21.3%), "becoming pregnant" (16.5%), "their own health problems" (14.6%) and "return to work" (4.9%) . ( Table III)

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**Table III.** The Reasons for Stopping Breastfeeding ( n= 206 )

Variable	n	%
Lack of milk	88	42.7
Grow up of child	44	21.3
Pregnancy	34	16.5
Mother's health problem	30	14.6
Return to work	10	4.9

A total of 45.6 percent of the mothers had stopped the breastfeeding giving supplement nutriments and reducing the number of suckling.

Over a quarter (30.1 percent) of the mothers expressed that they took away from the breast their babies with different applications to nipple. These were to smear tomato sauce, pepper, tooth paste to the nipple, to paint the nipple, to paste hair and wool and to keep the nipple with a plaster. Approximately 14.6 % of mothers noticed that they tried to forget the breast calling the child's attention to a different side in this period. The proportion of mothers who used divergence from the child as a method for stopping the breastfeeding was found as 9.7 % .( Table IV).

**Table IV.** The Methods Which Used For Stopping Breastfeeding ( n = 206)

Variable	n	%
Reducing of suckling number and starting to supplement nutriments	94	45.6
To do application to breast	62	30.1
Attract attention to a different aspect	30	14.6
To go away from the child	20	9.7

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### **Discussion**

In this research, it was determined that 34 % of mothers had stopped breastfeeding when their babies were six months. This is a pleased finding not to meet a mother who stopped breastfeeding before six months. However, these babies did not take any mother's milk after six months. This situation does not adjust to the World Health Organization's suggestions about continue of the breastfeeding<sup>10</sup>. In recent study, the proportion of the mothers who regularly suckled to their babies during 19- 24 months was found as 16.5 %. It has been determined that 47.5 % of mothers suckled to their babies between 1 to 6 months and 16.78 % of them suckled babies more than 13 months in Arıkan and Alp's study was conducted in the same district<sup>11</sup>. In the other research<sup>20</sup> which made in same district, the breastfeeding ratio at 4-6 months has been found as 21.7 %. In the difference region in Turkey it has been found that the ratio of breastfeeding was 76.9 % at six month<sup>21</sup>. The mean duration of breastfeeding in Turkey is approximately 12 months. This ratio is very acceptable according to WHO's suggestions. But there is a problem about time of beginning to supplement nutriment and continuing to breastfeeding<sup>22</sup>. It should be remembered that early or late beginning to supplement nutriment will be effect to promotion of breastfeeding.

The commonest main reason for stopping breastfeeding as identified in this research was lack of milk (42.7%). Taşkın et al<sup>12</sup> explained that 45.6 % of mothers had shown the lack of milk as a reason for stopping breastfeeding in their study. The lack of milk for stopping breastfeeding was shown by mothers as an important reason in various studies prepared in other countries too<sup>3,16-19</sup>. It is necessary to control the technique of suckling in every women who said that "I was lacking of milk". The wrong suckling technique can be caused to the lack of milk<sup>3,23,24</sup>. In addition the mother's perception of "not enough milk" or "lack of milk" is commonly due either to factors related to inadequate breastfeeding technique (such as poor attachment, short or infrequent feeds),

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or psychological factors (such as lack of confidence), or both. Mothers also indicated to “grow up of a child” (21.3 %), “becoming pregnant” (16.5%), “their own health problems” (46.4%) and “return to work” (4.9%) as reason for stopping breastfeeding. In the previous reports, the return to work/school has shown as an important reason for stopping breastfeeding<sup>3,16,25,26,27</sup>. Health care staff can help working mothers sustain breastfeeding by teaching them on the expression and storage of breast milk.

Approximately half, 45.6 percent, of the mothers explained that they stopped the breastfeeding giving supplement nutriments and reducing the number of suckling. The first step of stopping breastfeeding is to start supplement nutriments in the literature too<sup>2,13</sup>. The proportion of mothers who expressed that they took away from the breast their babies with different applications to breast was 30.1%. These applications were to smear tomato sauce, pepper, tooth paste, paint, to paste hair and wool to nipple and to keep the nipple with a plaster. These practices can suddenly cause to stop of emotional communication between mother and her child. In this period, when the child needs more attract attention and love, he/she can effects as physical and emotional with these methods. These can cause with the negative and undesirable results.

Approximately 14.6 % of the mothers noticed that they tried to forget the breast calling the child's attention to a different side in this period. This method estimated as a method which was not harmful for mothers and their children. The proportion of mothers who used the divergence from the child was found as 9.7 %. It should be remembered that separation from parents in the early childhood, particularly will be able to handicap to organize having confidence which is one of the major developmental task in this period<sup>15</sup>.

In conclusion, although the breast milk is an unique food for babies the results of this study suggest that breastfeeding practice declines during the first six months of a baby's life. The main reason of mothers' for stopping breastfeeding was lack of milk. Mothers had used several

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methods for the stopping breastfeeding which may be harmful. These results indicated that the mothers should learn more about the benefits of breast feeding and how to breastfeed their infants correctly. They should be motivated to activate the onset of lactation and maintain it through frequent and intense infant suckling. In order not to deprive babies of this unique food mothers should be informed before and after birth The use of professional resources such as printed materials, nurses, midwives and physicians can build knowledge. Support of health care worker can prevent the wrong and harmful practices in this period.

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