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Wednesday, August 02, 2006

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Talk](#) | [All Headlines](#)**PAGE 1****Breastfeed can save thousands, says study****Tarannum Manjul**

Lucknow, August 1: THE simple practice of breast-feeding can save about 70,000 of the 4,52,062 children who die annually in the state before they are one year old.

The startling figures come from surveys conducted by UNICEF and the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) as the World Breastfeeding Week kicked off on Tuesday. According to the studies, about 46 per cent of mothers discard their child's intake of colostrums — the first immunisation that prepares a child to fight several diseases.

According to BPNI's experts, breastfeeding can not merely save many infant lives but is also much healthier than supplementary baby food. The study attempts to create awareness about Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) IMS Act.

Dr Arun Gupta, an eminent paediatrician and founder of BPNI, said: "There is not much awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding, although the IMS Act is in existence since 1992. For the past several years we are trying hard to alert parents that these supplementary foods are actually harmful for their child."

The state's infant mortality rate — 72 out of every 1,000 babies born — is enough to point out the need for promotion of breastfeeding, Dr Gupta said.

"People are not even aware that complementary feeding can save only five per cent babies under five from dying, whereas breastfeeding can prevent upto 16 per cent of such deaths," he said.

The UNICEF findings reveal more shocking facts: In Kheri district, 68.2 per cent mothers discard colostrum, while the figure stands at 40 per cent in Lucknow district. The lowest was in Basti district, where only 29.9 per cent women discarded colostrums. According to the respondents, the main reasons for forsaking colostrums was advice of elders (52.7 per cent) and a popular belief

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that it is not good for a baby's health (21.7 per cent).

Dr Gupta said the health awareness campaigns should also focus at promoting breastfeeding — “even politicians should point this out, to have a healthy nation.”

UP's mortal combat

54,46,538 births every year
4,52,062 die before reaching one
14,983,427 survive to reach three
7,746,431 of these 'survivors' underweight
(Source: UNICEF study)

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