



Providing A Holistic Approach for Caregiver Education on Infants Feeding

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Introduction

- Feeding difficulties such as oral-motor delays, bottle/ breastfeeding challenges, and limited food progression can often impact children's abilities to safely and effectively engage in daily routines (Marcus & Brenton, 2022).
- Caregivers often experience uncertainty about developmental milestones, what red flags to observe for in their children, and when it is appropriate to seek therapy for support (Kalhoff et al., 2024).
- Occupational therapy practitioners play a vital role in this process, evaluating readiness, promoting safe mealtime routines, supporting oral- motor skill development, and educating caregivers on appropriate feeding strategies (Marcus & Brenton, 2022).
- Limited research shows that interventions such as multimedia and community programs in the beginning stages of breastfeeding help with a smoother initiation process between mother and child (Balogun et al., 2016).
- The purpose of this project was to design and implement educational resources for mothers to help enhance feeding practices and caregiver knowledge.

Methods

- Creation of an asynchronous virtual education program.
- Content for each internet post was developed by creating a blog post or social media infographic weekly and reviewed by capstone mentors to ensure credibility.
- Common topics included occupational therapy's role in feeding, prenatal checklists, bottle/breastfeeding basics, developmental milestones, choke prevention, aspiration signs, transitioning to solids, and when to refer to therapy.
- Completed posts were added to *Bloom Pediatric Therapy's* and *Pediatric Foundations Therapy's* official websites and social media platforms.
- Content engagement was tracked by website analytics and social media interactions per post.

Results

- Views counts for each post were significantly higher than the reach, showing that users re-viewed content post multiple times.
- Engagement with posts consistent across topics.
- Variable rates of views, reach, interactions, impressions and comments for each post, but all represent positive feedback.

Table 1: Total Consumer Impact of Feeding Education Content

Topic	Views	Reach	Interactions	Impressions	Comments
From Diapers to Cuddles: What Every New Mom Should Know	132	71	3	78	1
Birth to 15 Months Feeding Milestones	109	61	4	76	0
Choke Prevention/ Aspiration	90	43	1	51	0
Little Bites, Big skills Everything You Need to Know About Introducing First Foods to Your Baby	92	44	1	44	0
What Constitutes Therapy?	Not Reported				

Fig.1 Feeding Milestones Birth To 8 Months

Feeding Milestones Birth To 8 Months		
Age Range	Key Milestones/ skills	Helpful Tips
0 - 3 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Latching onto breast/bottleBaby begins practicing tongue controlDevelops an integrated suck and swallow pattern during feeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">During the first few months of your baby's life, their primary source of nutrition is provided by breast milk or infant formula
4 - 6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Better control of oral musclesBaby may use hands to explore different foods during feedingMonitor readiness signs to introduce purées between 4-6 monthsBegins transitioning to puréesIntroduce feeding utensilsBaby may be holding onto the bottle using both hands to complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Slowly introduce puréed food during normal feeds to maintain familiarity vs. providing a "quick switch."Signs of readiness may include good head/neck control, sitting balance, and showing interest in foodMake sure the baby is in a supported sitting position before feeding solidsDon't be afraid to let your child explore and get messy during meal time
7 - 8 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">TeethingSelf-feeding / utensil useTransitioning to mashed solidsGrossing (cuddles) / reaching for foodAble to bring together lips to close down on a spoonIntroduce open cup / straw usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep solids to a very soft texture that can be easily melted to prevent chokingBaby should still be receiving breast milk or formula for nutritional needs, alongside eating solidsNever leave the baby unattended during feeding time

Fig. 2 Feeding Milestones 9 To 15 Months

Feeding Milestones 9 To 15 months		
Age Range	Key Milestones/ skills	Helpful Tips
9 - 12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Chewing skills are developingGradually improved open cup/ straw usageUse of fine motor skills to pick up food during self-feedingUses tongue to clean residue from around the mouthBit-sized pieces of meat can be incorporated during meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage your child to feed themselves during meal timeProviding different textures during meal time is important to enhance oral motor skillsSlice food into easy-to-hold finger-shaped pieces that are easy for your baby to grasp
12 - 15 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhanced cup drinkingFood palate continues to increasePractice using utensils to self-feed with bite-sized pieces of table foodAble to handle feeding utensils independentlyAround 12+ months, a baby may be transitioned from breast milk formula to whole milk, pending the doctor's approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to offer healthy meals to your child to progress taste palateConsult with a pediatrician before introducing your child to whole milk

Discussion

- Results support social media as a tool for providing feeding education to caregivers, especially when topics were visually clear and focused.
- Engagement remained consistent across the project suggesting a strong interest in feeding education throughout the targeted population.
- Data shows views counts for each post were significantly higher than the reach, showing that users re-viewed content post multiple times.
- Simplifying complex feeding topics made content more user-friendly and easier for caregivers to engage and share content.

Discussion continued

- Findings support the value of occupational therapy in promoting developmentally appropriate feeding strategies and supporting consistent caregiver education.
- Engagement on social media post indicates that visual supports can enhance caregiver confidence and serves as a reliable source for reference.

Limitations

- Variability in caregiver literacy may have affected comprehensions of given information.
- Some mothers may have preferred infographics over extended blog content, which could have affected engagement.
- Two post were not reported affecting the accuracy of engagement tracking.

Future Directions

- Develop instructional videos to supplement content and enhance engagement across all platforms.
- Integrate caregiver trainings to support them in implementing strategies into their daily routines.

Conclusion

- Providing educational resources via virtual multimedia presentation increased reach and engagement within the targeted community.
- Findings suggest that providing readily accessible feeding resources to mothers increases their knowledge and supports their confidence in pediatric feeding.
- Program demonstrates potential for ongoing research and future expansion to benefit a more diverse population.

References

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