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**COURSE TITLE: RECENT ADVANCES IN HUMAN NUTRITION**

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**QUESTION**

Using the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2019, write a short essay on infant and young child feeding in Nigeria.

**ANSWER**

Feeding practices play a critical role in child development. Poor feeding practices can adversely impact the health and nutritional status of children, which in turn has direct consequences for their mental and physical development, especially in the critical window from birth to 2 years of age. Duration and intensity of breastfeeding also aﬀects the health status of mothers, the period of postpartum fertility and, hence, the length of birth interval and the fertility levels. Ideally, infants should be breastfed within one hour of birth, exclusively breastfed (EBF) for the ﬁrst six months of life and then continue to be breastfed at least up to two years with age-appropriate, nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods.

In the NNHS 2018 survey, data on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices was collected for all the children aged 023 months using a 24 hour recall from caregivers. The results from the NDHS 2018 shows that the awareness and practice of breastfeeding is a fairly common practice in Nigeria, with almost 97 percent of children ever breastfed. This ﬁnding is consistent with NDHS 2013 survey, NNHS 2014 and MICS 2016-17 report when respectively 95, 97 and 95 percent of children nationwide were reported to have been breastfed at some time. Also from the 2018 NDHS according to zone, the highest percentage of children ever breastfed is in South South and North West (98 percent), the lowest being North Central (96 percent). At state level, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Gombe had all (100 percent) the assessed children aged 0-23 months reportedly ever breastfed, while Ekiti has the lowest (84 percent). Katsina which recorded the lowest ever breastfed rate in NNHS 2014 showed the greatest improvement from 89 percent in 2014 to 99 percent this year.

Since breastfeeding has so many health beneﬁts for both mother and child, it is fundamental that it begins as soon as possible. Early initiation of breastfeeding contributes to reducing overall neonatal mortality by preventing hypothermia through skin-to-skin contact and fosters bonding between mother and child. Early initiation of breastfeeding also reduces mothers' risk of post-partum haemorrhage as it facilitates the release of oxytocin, which helps the contraction of uterus. Additionally, the milk produced by the mother during the ﬁrst post-partum days (colostrums) provides protective antibodies and essential nutrients to newborns, thus acting as a sort of ﬁrst immunization. Therefore it is highly recommended that children be fed colostrum immediately within one hour after birth and that they continue to be exclusively breastfed even if the regular breast milk has not yet started to ﬂow.