

Concept Policy Statements

Mothering Through Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding provides a complete way of meeting a baby's primary needs, which include touch, acceptance, and warmth, as well as food. Every time a mother puts her baby to breast she uniquely and naturally satisfies this whole complex of needs. The intimate interaction between mother and baby, which deepens as the breastfeeding relationship continues, serves as the framework for increasing the mother's capacity to understand her baby as it enhances the baby's responsiveness to mother's cues. The "mothering hormone," prolactin, which is produced in response to the baby's suckling, further encourages the mother's sensitivity to her baby.

While it is certainly possible to satisfy a baby's primary needs in the absence of breastfeeding, there is no other act which so beautifully and automatically grants all of these needs at the same time.

(Apr 94)

Mother and Baby Together Early and Often

The terms "early and often" are used rather than an arbitrary time limit for establishing a milk supply and breastfeeding relationship. Special circumstances can impose separation in the early weeks after birth, presenting challenges to the mother and baby. With an understanding of how "early and often" prevents difficulties, every effort can be made to keep mothers and babies together and nursing from birth.

(Apr 94)

Mother / Baby Relationship

In considering a mother for leadership, the focus shall be on the mother's breastfeeding experience, on her awareness of her baby's need for her presence, her continuing flexible availability to her baby, and her willingness to support the philosophy of LLLI.

(Feb 85)

Breast Milk as Superior Infant Food

Breast milk is a complete infant food containing all the nutrients in ideal proportion for optimal human growth. The growing infant's changing needs are matched by appropriate changes in the composition of his mother's milk. Breast milk provides more than nutrition. Beginning as colostrum, breast milk works with the infant's developing immune system to provide protection against a wide array of illnesses, a benefit which extends beyond infancy. Breast milk is easily digested and eliminated and also reduces the infant's exposure to allergens and allergic illnesses. Furthermore, the psychological benefits of breastfeeding are invaluable: frequent opportunities for touching, holding and eye contact serve as important stimuli for the infant's development. Unique and unduplicated, breast milk is the superior infant food for babies at all economic levels around the world.

(Apr 94)

Starting Solids

For the full-term healthy infant, breast milk alone provides optimal nutrition for growth and development during the early months of life. When a mother considers starting other food and drink, the focus shall be on the mother's awareness of her baby's specific nutritional needs and signs of readiness, rather than upon the baby's age or outside factors.

Physiological and behavioral signs of readiness for other foods and drink include, but are not limited to:

- The baby's appetite increases and does not subside after several days of intensive nursing.
- The baby is able to sit up unsupported, facilitating eating and swallowing.
- The baby not only reaches for and tastes food, but also swallows it.
- The baby can digest other foods and drink, as evidenced by the appearance of the baby's stool.
- The baby's teeth are appearing.

(Apr 93)

Weaning

Natural weaning is the gradual end of the breastfeeding relationship between a responsive mother and her growing child.

As the child matures, his changing physical and emotional needs are increasingly satisfied through means other than breastfeeding.

Although the child usually initiates natural weaning, the mother continues to take an active role by determining in each situation whether nursing or some other approach will best meet her child's needs.

A mother demonstrates her commitment to natural weaning through her sensitivity to her child's individual needs and readiness; her flexibility in responding to the unpredictable course of natural weaning and her understanding of and trust in the fundamental stages of a child's development.

(Oct 92)

Father's Role

In considering a mother for leadership, the focus shall be on her understanding of the father's role, not as a mother substitute, but as a unique figure in the baby's life. Recognizing that mothers' circumstances vary and that they may have little control over a father's presence, involvement, or philosophy, the emphasis should be on her ability and willingness to help others appreciate a father's contribution to the breastfeeding relationship.

(Feb 92)

Nutrition

Nutrition information and recommendations in *THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING* shall be considered the essence of our approach to the subject of nutrition and recommendations in *WHOLE FOODS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY* shall be considered examples of the application of this approach.

(Feb 84)

Loving Guidance

The goal of the policy on Loving Guidance, i.e., helping a child grow to be a loving, caring, self-disciplined adult, is ideally reached by an emphasis on discipline/teaching methods and attitudes that foster learning while maintaining self-esteem. This process reflects awareness of, sensitivity to, and respect for developmental needs, capabilities, and individuality. In considering a mother for leadership, the focus will be on the entirety of her relationship with her child and her willingness to support the philosophy and goal of loving guidance by example and word. Harsh or restrictive physical or verbal methods, or a lack of parental attention, concern, or intervention are inconsistent with the philosophy and goals of the Loving Guidance policy. Yet, we understand and accept isolated lapses from our ideals as we continually strive to grow in our understanding of Loving Guidance.

(Oct 86)

Cross-references:

Philosophy, La Leche League International
Publications: LLLI Philosophy
La Leche League International Philosophy – Appendix 1

El Concepto del Destete

El destete natural es llegar gradualmente al fin de una relación de amamantamiento entre una madre atenta a las necesidades de su hijo, y su hijo.

A medida que el niño alcance su madurez, sus necesidades físicas y emocionales cambian y son satisfechas cada vez más a través de otros medios además de la lactancia materna.

Aunque el niño por lo general inicie el destete natural, la madre continúa tomando un papel activo, determinando en cada instancia si el amamantamiento u otro método, satisficará mejor las necesidades del niño.

Una madre demuestra su compromiso al destete natural a través de su sensibilidad hacia las necesidades individuales de su hijo y su preparación; su flexibilidad en responder al curso impredecible del destete natural y su entendimiento de, y a su confianza en, las etapas fundamentales del desarrollo del niño.