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Breast Milk and Bottle-Feeding

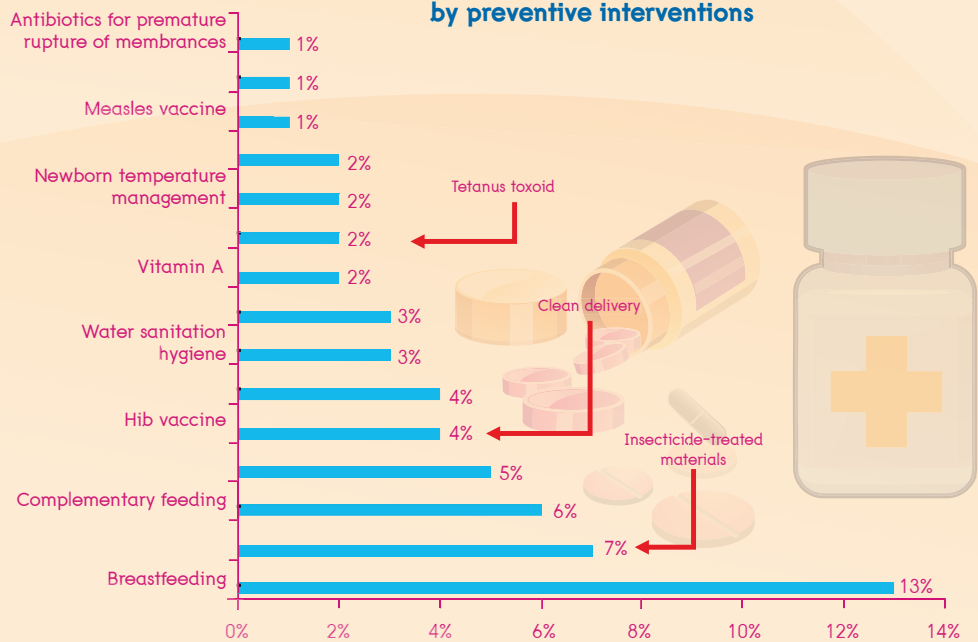
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Drinking breast milk reduces the death of children under 5 years of age more than any other factor. Therefore, babies should drink only breast milk for a full 6 months. But bottle-feeding even breast milk to children until they fall asleep at night increases the risk of tooth decay. Therefore, children should be weaned from the bottle at the age of one or one and a half at the latest. In Thailand, however, children are weaned from the bottle at an average age of 2 years and 5 months.

Food is essential to the physical health of preschool children. The best food for young children is breast milk. According to the World Fit for Children, babies should drink only breast milk for a full 6 months. After that, they should take supplementary foods appropriate for their age as well as continuing to drink breast milk until the age of 2.

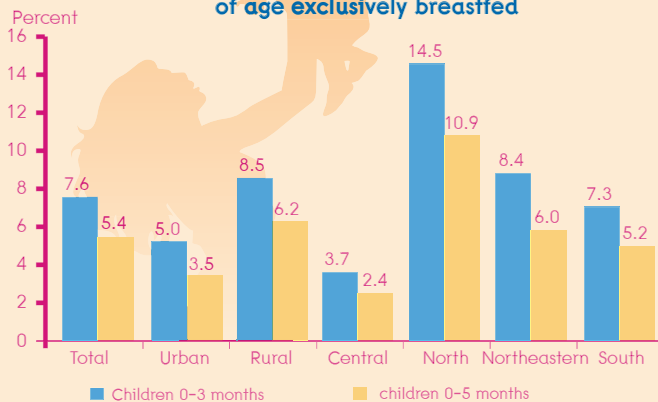
The direct benefits of drinking breast milk are improved immunity, reduced allergies, and ingestion of nutrients that boost brain development. The indirect benefits include development of a strong mother-baby bond. According to studies from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2005), breastfeeding reduces the mortality of children under the age of 5 by as much as 13 percent, the most significant amount compared to other preventive methods against disease.

Reducing the mortality rate for children under 5 years of age by preventive interventions



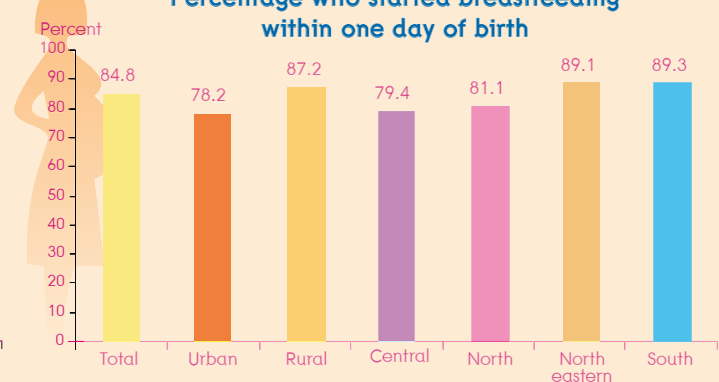
Source: World Health Organization 2005

Percentage of infants under 6 months of age exclusively breastfed



Source: The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) December 2005 - February 2006, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

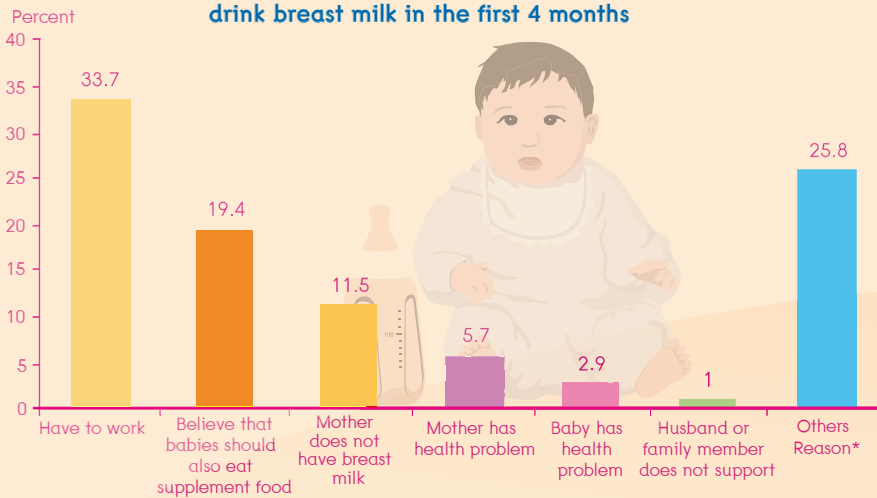
Percentage who started breastfeeding within one day of birth



Source: The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) December 2005 - February 2006, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

A survey of children in Thailand conducted during 2005-2006 revealed that only 7.6 percent of 0-3-month-old babies and 5.4 percent of 0-5 month babies were exclusively breastfed. Rural babies were breastfed more than city babies. Babies from the Northern region were exclusively breastfed more than babies from other regions. Meanwhile, the Central region (including Bangkok) had the lowest number of babies who were breastfed.

Reasons why babies cannot exclusively drink breast milk in the first 4 months



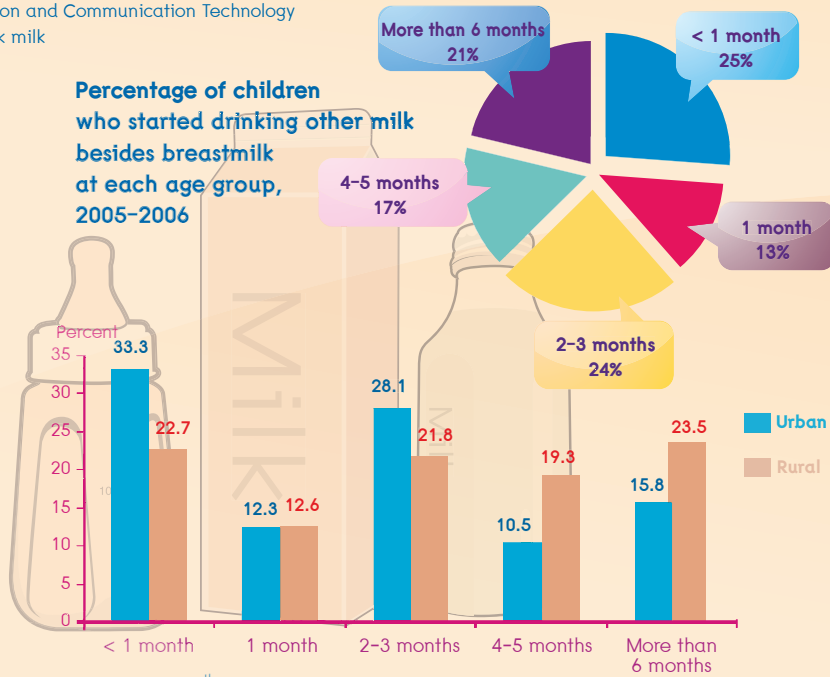
1 out of 4 children who drink other kinds of milk besides breast milk are children under 1 month. Children aged 1 – 3 months living in the city started drinking other kinds of milk besides breastmilk faster than rural children.

Source : The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) December 2005 – February 2006, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
 Note: * Afraid will have bad figure, baby refuse to drink milk

Though breast milk is the best food source for babies, mothers may be unable to breastfeed for various reasons. For example, they may have to work, or they may believe that babies should eat supplementary food. The reason may also be health-related, such as an inability to produce breast milk or other health problems of the mother or child. If the mother is unable to exclusively breastfeed her child, the baby is usually bottle-fed instead. According to the good nutrition practices, these babies should be given formula milk.

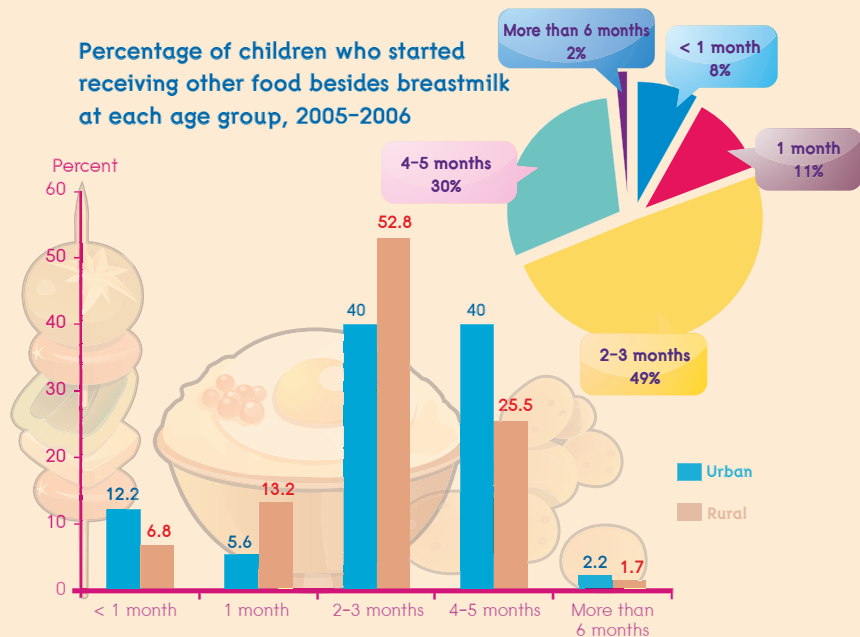
Today, child-related institutes recommend that children be weaned from the bottle and start drinking milk from glasses at the age of one or one and a half at the latest. Prolonged bottle-feeding will cause inappropriate eating for their age and health problems such as tooth decay, refusal to eat solids, low body weight, insufficient uptake of nutrients, and obesity. In addition, after this age, it will be harder for children to be weaned from the bottle.

Percentage of children who started drinking other milk besides breastmilk at each age group, 2005–2006



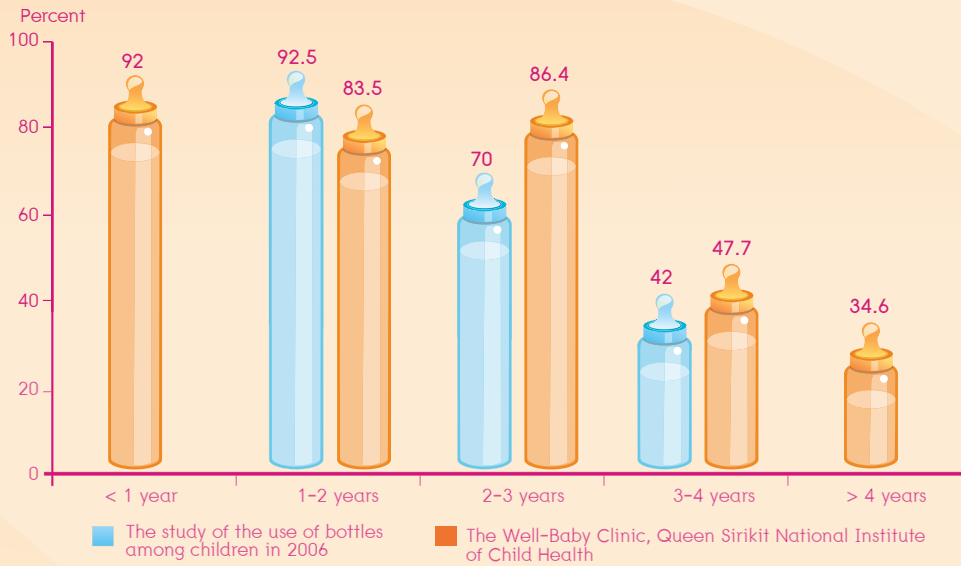
Source : The 5th National Nutrition Survey 2006

Percentage of children who started receiving other food besides breastmilk at each age group, 2005–2006

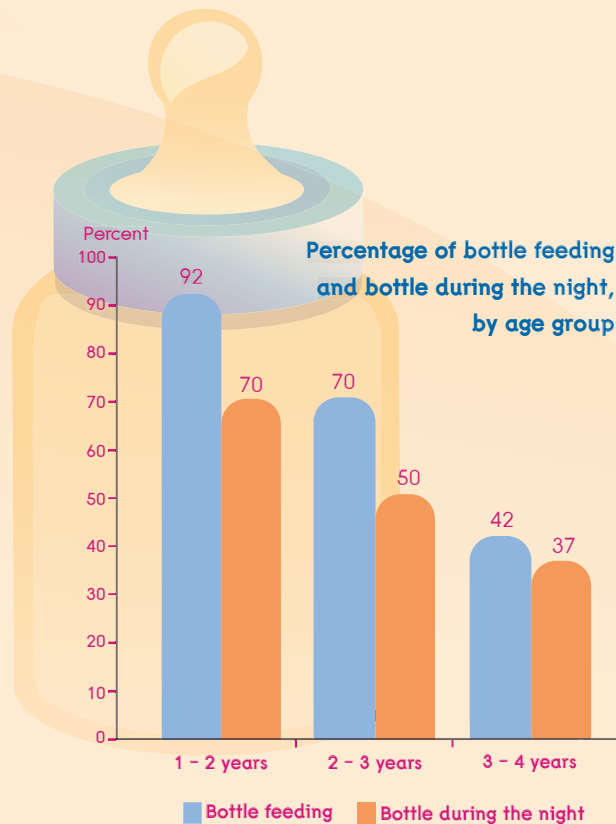


Source : The 5th National Nutrition Survey 2006

Percentage of children who bottle feeding at each age group



Source : Siraporn Sawasdivorn and Suntaree Ratanachu-ek. Bottle-Feeding Situation



Source : Siraporn Sawasdivorn and Others 2007

From a study of the use of bottles among children in 2006 and from interviews with parents at the Well-Baby Clinic, Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health, it was found that 80 percent of children aged between 1 and 3 still used a bottle. Half of them drank milk from the bottle during the night (from midnight to 4 am). Part of the problem was due to child-rearing behavior that encouraged children to be attached to the bottle. It was revealed that 46 percent of children aged between 6 months and 4 years old fell asleep with the bottle in their mouth. In addition, 34 percent of children who were raised to be attached to the bottle were given nighttime feedings when they started to toss and turn. On average, Thai children stop using the bottle at 2 years and 5 months. However, children should not stop drinking milk entirely because milk provides a rich source of protein and calcium for their growth.