

# INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING

Key points for all sector staff



***IYCF-E is not just a matter for nutritionists: all emergency actors and sectors need to consider how their actions affect the survival needs of infants and young children.***

## Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding protects babies from disease, malnutrition and death. Breastfeeding also promotes good health in mothers and a good and safe relationship between mother and baby.
- All newborns should be breastfed immediately after birth. Exclusive breastfeeding is best for infants under 6 months of age. Other foods and drinks (including formula) may harm the baby.
- Breastfeeding to 2 years of age is recommended.
- Infant formula must only be used in controlled circumstances with health worker support. Incorrect usage of formula may lead to serious disease or malnutrition.
- Donations of breastmilk substitutes should not be distributed freely in the general population.
- Use of bottles and teats should be avoided as it is hard to keep them clean.
- Mothers who are having difficulties with breastfeeding or who are using formula, bottles and/or teats, should be referred to health workers for counselling and support.

## Other considerations

- Specific spaces, such as baby-friendly spaces and mother-to-mother support groups, should be offered to all mothers with young babies to promote healthy infant feeding practices.
- Adequate water and sanitation services should be available for mothers and young babies.
- Pregnant mothers or those with small children should be prioritized when receiving services.

## Complementary feeding

- After 6 months of age, infants should predominantly receive breastmilk with complementary foods slowly added.
- Complementary foods include any locally available food from all food groups (grain, roots and tubers, legumes and nuts, fruits and vegetables, and animal source foods) prepared in a suitable way for the infant.
- Mothers may need support to ensure the supply of complementary foods is adequate in quantity (sufficient amount), diversity (variety of options for balanced diets) and quality (foods are fresh and prepared appropriately to not lose nutrients).

## Maternal Nutrition

- It is critical that mothers receive enough food during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.
- Mothers also need micronutrient supplements during pregnancy and after the birth of her child. Mothers should be referred to a health worker for antenatal and postnatal services to receive this and other support.

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### ***DANGER SIGNS TO LOOK FOR in PLW and 0-23 MONTH OLDS:***

- ⇒ ***Weak or visibly malnourished infant***
  - ⇒ ***Absence of mother or caregiver***
  - ⇒ ***Physically or mentally ill mother***
  - ⇒ ***Malnourished mother***
  - ⇒ ***First-time mother without support network***
  - ⇒ ***Poor housing/WASH facilities***
  - ⇒ ***Food scarcity in the family***
  - ⇒ ***Use of bottles/teats and/or formula***
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