

Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (IYCF-E)

Key Messages for All Sectors

State of Palestine, November 2023



IYCF-E programming is set of lifesaving interventions that targets pregnant and breastfeeding women, adolescents and girls, infants, and young children, some of the most vulnerable groups during humanitarian crisis.

IYCF-E is not just a matter for nutritionists: all emergency actors 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 infant 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, malnutrition, and death.
- 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

- Private, shaded, safe spaces should be offered to all mothers with young babies to promote healthy infant feeding practices.
- Mothers and young babies should be prioritized for water and water treatment services.
- 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 available food from as many food groups as possible prepared in a suitable way for the infant.
- Mothers with young children should be prioritized to ensure a supply of complementary foods that are adequate in quantity (sufficient amount), as diverse as possible, and when available, as fresh as possible.

Maternal Nutrition

- It is critical that mothers receive enough food during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Pregnant and lactating women should be prioritized for food security & WASH services (extra food, extra water) to ensure that she is encouraged to breastfeed her baby.
- 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.

All the following should be referred to hospital, nutrition, or appropriate focal point immediately:

Infant

- Weak or visibly malnourished infant
- Infant with recent weight loss
- Presence of oedema in infant
- Infant with diarrhea or fever
- Absence of mother or caregiver

Mother/Caregiver

- Malnourished, ill, injured, or severely dehydrated mother
- Mother having difficulty with or who is unable to breastfeed
- Use of bottles/teats and/or infant formula
- Survivor of GBV requesting support