

BREASTFEEDING: MESSAGES

LAST UPDATE: MARCH 2022

About the Message Library

People affected by disaster must have access to timely, appropriate and accurate information to help them keep themselves and their families safe and well. They should know their rights, entitlements and be able to give feedback. Responders have a duty to put in place appropriate, systematic and coordinated mechanisms to ensure this.

Our Message Library offers clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for you to adapt and use in the context you are working in. These are intended to help you make a quick start on communicating with communities while you further develop mechanisms for on-going dialogue with diverse groups within each community.

For help contextualising and using the messages we recommend you do our e-learning course and read the following technical guidance.

E-learning

<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768>

Guidance

<https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/cdac-message-library-user-guidance>

Breastfeeding in emergencies

Mothers, even malnourished mothers, can still breastfeed even under the stressful conditions of emergencies.

Why regular breastfeeding is important

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. Breastmilk contains everything a child needs to develop. It is recommended that:

- mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth;
- infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health;
- and thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods, while continuing to be breastfed; and
- breastfeeding should continue for up to two years or beyond.

Breastfeeding protects infants from childhood illnesses and has long-term benefits for the child. Breastfeeding also benefits mothers. The more you breastfeed, the more milk your body will produce. If you feel like your baby is hungry, breastfeeding him/her more frequently will ensure you produce more milk."

Why is bonding important?

Breastfeeding can help mothers bond with their babies. Breastfeeding makes your baby feel safe and loved, helps the mother to deal better with stress and helps the mother to love her baby.

Risks of not breastfeeding

If you do not breastfeed your baby they could suffer from infections and malnutrition which will affect their chances of survival. The most important thing you can do to protect the health of your baby is to breastfeed him/her.

How much milk should be given?

It is recommended that babies initiate breastfeeding within the first hour of birth and be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life – meaning no other foods or liquids are provided, including water.

Infants should be breastfed on demand – that is as often as the child wants, day and night. No bottles, teats or pacifiers should be used.

From the age of 6 months, children should begin eating safe and adequate complementary foods while continuing to breastfeed for up to 2 years and beyond.

Introducing new foods to your baby.

Once your baby is 6 months old you should feed them nutritious foods (contextualise message with local grains, fruits, vegetables, and animal source foods) two to three times a day in addition to breastfeeding. At nine months you should feed them three to four times a day. Continue breastfeeding until your baby is at least 2 years old.

It is recommended that:

- breastfeeding should not be decreased when starting on solids;
- food should be given with a spoon or cup, not in a bottle;
- food should be clean and safe; and
- ample time is needed for young children to learn to eat solid foods."

Types of complementary food you can feed your baby

As your child grows you can introduce other types of food such as [contextualise using local nutritious foods].

Breastfeeding when babies are sick?

You should continue breastfeeding when they are sick because your milk contains nutrients that helps fight illness and will help your baby to get better. Sick babies should be treated as quickly as possible at a health facility if you spot any danger signs include feeding problems, or if the newborn has reduced activity, difficult breathing, a fever, fits or convulsions, or feels cold. Your nearest facility is [insert details].

The importance of breastfeeding to tackle pneumonia

A breastfed child who has a cough or cold may have difficulty breastfeeding. Since breastfeeding helps to fight the illness and is important for the child's growth, the mother should continue to breastfeed often. If a child cannot suckle, the breastmilk can be expressed into a clean cup and the child can then be fed from the cup.

Availability of counselling

Breastfeeding women can get help and advice on breastfeeding and related issues at [insert info].

Using breastmilk substitutes

Artificial feeding using breast milk substitutes is especially risky to the health and survival of babies in an emergency. If you have to use a breastmilk substitute do not use a bottle to feed the baby but use a cup that is more easily cleaned. If your baby develops diarrhoea, continue to feed your baby full strength breast milk substitute and seek medical attention.

If you are responsible for a baby that is not breastfed and is using or needs breast milk substitutes, you should contact [insert info] for advice and skilled support as they can help monitor your baby's nutrition and health. If you want to find out more about supplies of breast milk substitute, and to get advice, go to your nearest health clinic at [insert info] from [insert info] to [insert info]."

What if I have stopped breastfeeding or I am caring for a baby who is separated from his mother?

If you are caring for a baby and are not breastfeeding, go to your nearest health facility to seek advice. Your nearest health facility is [insert info]. Opening hours are from [insert time] to [insert time].

Transmission of HIV through breastfeeding can be reduced with drugs

An HIV-infected mother can pass the infection to her infant during pregnancy, delivery and through breastfeeding. However, antiretroviral (ARV) drugs given to either the mother or HIV-exposed infant reduces the risk of transmission. Together, breastfeeding and ARVs have the potential to significantly improve infants' chances of surviving while remaining HIV uninfected. WHO recommends that when HIV-infected mothers breastfeed, they should receive ARVs and follow WHO guidance for infant feeding.

Location of stress-free spaces

If you are breastfeeding, dedicated breastfeeding spaces have been set up in [insert info] where you can rest and breastfeed your baby. These are safe places where you can find privacy, security and shelter, where you are provided with water and food and where you can find information about important services to you.

See also the topic area: Birth and Babies

REFERENCES

For more information on this topic, we recommend you read the following references.

World Health Organization (2022). **Breastfeeding.**
<https://www.who.int/health-topics/breastfeeding>

World Health Organization (2022). **Fact sheets/Detail/Newborns: improving survival and well-being.**

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/newborns-reducing-mortality>

HELP US KEEP THE LIBRARY UP TO DATE

If you would like to contribute to topic reviews, have found a message that needs greater clarity, or wish to create a new topic, please contact us at info@cdacnetwork.org.