

Breastfeeding. The Essence of Life

“Improved breastfeeding alone could save the lives of more than 3,500 children every day, more than any other preventive intervention”

Innocenti Declaration 2005 on Infant and Young Child Feeding

What everyone should know about breastfeeding*

- 1 Breastmilk alone is the only food and drink an infant needs for the first six months. No other food or drink, not even water, is usually needed during this period.
- 2 Newborn babies should be kept close to their mothers and begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
- 3 Frequent breastfeeding causes more milk to be produced. Almost every mother can breastfeed successfully.
- 4 Breastfeeding helps protect babies and young children against dangerous illnesses. It also creates a special bond between mother and child.
- 5 Bottle-feeding can lead to illness and death. If a woman cannot breastfeed her infant, the baby should be fed breastmilk or a breastmilk substitute from an ordinary clean cup.
- 6 From the age of six months, babies need a variety of additional foods, but breastfeeding should continue through the child's second year and beyond.
- 7 A woman employed away from her home can continue to breastfeed her child if she breastfeeds as often as possible when she is with the infant.
- 8 Exclusive breastfeeding can give a woman more than 98 per cent protection against pregnancy for six months after giving birth – but only if her menstrual periods have not resumed, if her baby breastfeeds frequently day and night, and if the baby is not given any other food or drinks, or a pacifier or dummy.
- 9 There is a risk that a woman living with HIV may pass the virus on to her infant through breastfeeding. Women who are infected should be counseled by a trained health worker on the benefits and risks of all infant feeding options and supported in carrying out their infant feeding decision.
- 10 All women have the right to an environment that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding, including the right to protection from commercial pressures to artificially feed their babies. The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes aims to provide the necessary protection by prohibiting the promotion of all breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles and teats.

* Based on *Facts for Life*, published by UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNAIDS, WFP and the World Bank

Get more information on breastfeeding by visiting, www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_breastfeeding.html

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