

# FEEDING OTHER FOODS WHILE CONTINUING TO BREASTFEED:



## Guiding Principles for Complementary Feeding

- 1** Start giving other foods at 6 months. Breastfeed exclusively from birth to 6 months, then begin to give tastes of other foods while continuing to breastfeed frequently and on-demand.
- 2** Continue breastfeeding for 2 years or longer. Continue breastfeeding as often and for as long as you and your baby want to.
- 3** Practice 'Responsive Feeding'. Respond to your child's signs of hunger and feeding abilities. Give help and encouragement (without force feeding), feeding slowly and patiently, experimenting with different foods, tastes, combinations and textures, minimising distractions, using plenty of smiles, eye contact and encouraging words, so that feeding becomes a time for learning and love.
- 4** Prepare and store foods safely. Wash and clean your hands, your child's hands and utensils before preparing food and feeding. Ideally, foods should be given immediately after preparation. If you have to store prepared foods unrefrigerated, use within 2 hours or save only until the next meal and reheat thoroughly. Store ingredients in cool closed containers so that they cannot get contaminated. Avoid using feeding bottles because they are difficult to keep clean.
- 5** Gradually increase the amount of food offered. Start with small amounts at 6 months and increase the amount offered as your child shows more interest, while maintaining frequent breastfeeding. The energy needs from complementary foods are approximately 200 kcal/day at 6-8 months, 300 kcal/day at 9-11 months, 550 kcal/day at 12-23 months.
- 6** Vary the consistency and variety of foods offered. Respond to your child's interest and ability to handle different textures and consistency. To begin with, babies need soft foods, but they soon learn to chew. By 8 months, babies can eat 'finger foods' - foods that they hold themselves. By 12 months, they can eat most family foods, cut into small pieces or softened as needed, but they still need to be given the nutrient-rich 'best bits' of the family's food.
- 7** Increase the number of times food is offered. Offer 2 to 3 times a day at 6-8 months and 3 to 4 times a day at 9-24 months, plus nutritious snacks once or twice a day, as desired, in addition to breastfeeding.
- 8** Give nutrient-rich foods. Give meat, poultry, fish, and/or eggs daily or as often as possible. Give beans, peas, lentils, nut-pastes, and/or milk products particularly if meals do not contain animal-source foods. Give coloured fruits and vegetables daily. Try not to give the 'staple' food on its own, for example, don't give plain rice or maize porridge, but add a nutrient-rich food such as, ground fish, egg, pulses or nut paste. Don't give sodas, sugary drinks, coffee or tea. These drinks fill tummies and displace more nutritious foods. If your child is thirsty, offer breastmilk or plain boiled water.
- 9** Protect Health with Vitamins and Minerals. Give a wide variety of foods as this will increase the chance of meeting vitamin and mineral requirements. Young children fed vegan or vegetarian diets usually need suitable vitamin and mineral supplements or fortified foods to meet their nutrient needs. Other mothers and children may also need to use appropriately fortified foods or take supplements according to local conditions.
- 10** Breastfeed more frequently during illness. Offer more fluids, and favourite foods during illness. For at least two weeks after illness, encourage your child to eat more food.



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations worldwide concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are the International Baby

Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and LINKAGES. WABA is in consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

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