

PRESS RELEASE

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 2008



For breastfeeding to succeed, mothers need to be supported

As the world celebrates the Summer Olympics in China from 8-24 August 2008, the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), will celebrate World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) from 1-7 August 2008. The theme for the 17th Annual WBW celebration, celebrated by more than 120 countries worldwide, is ***Mother Support: Going for the Gold***. With this theme, WABA, the WBW organisers, calls for increased support for mothers in achieving the gold standard of infant feeding: breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months, and continue breastfeeding together with feeding other appropriate complementary foods for up to two years and beyond.

A mother's need for support is similar to the needs of an Olympic athlete. Athletes combine determination and commitment with support from family, friends, trainers, community and government to compete successfully. In a similar way, a breastfeeding mother needs support to breastfeed. Both an athlete and a breastfeeding mother face challenges. For breastfeeding mothers, these challenges include overcoming misinformation, breastfeeding while working outside the home, coping in emergency situations and, most importantly overcoming doubts about her ability to breastfeed her baby.

The WABA Global Initiative for Mother Support for Breastfeeding (GIMS) defines ***mother support*** as "any support provided to mothers for the purpose of improving breastfeeding practices for both mother and infant and young child"

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have proposed four areas of successful breastfeeding support:

1. Health systems can support women through woman-centered care, humanistic treatment of each mother-child dyad, and attention to policies that impact the dyad.
2. Health worker education can support women directly through skilled and informed practices and humane, culturally sensitive practices.
3. The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions supports women by disallowing false and misleading marketing.
4. Community mobilisation, especially mother-to-mother and other peer support, both empowers and informs women.

1/2



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/ UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Action Food Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). For more information, please contact: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) • P.O.Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia • Tel: 60-4-6584816 • Fax: 60-4-6572655 • Email: waba@streamyx.com • Website: www.waba.org.my

“Support for breastfeeding is a necessary element for any woman, irrespective of her circumstance, to succeed in her breastfeeding experience. Together we need to strengthen the global development of and the networking among groups and organisations to work towards the improvement of Mother Support worldwide” says Paulina Smith, Coordinator of the WABA Mother Support Task Force.

The support a mother receives can be as formal as a visit to a health care professional or as informal as a reassuring smile for another mother. Support comes from professional and lay sources – health professionals, hospital and maternity facility, staff and policies, doulas and midwives, lactation consultants, trained peer counselors, mother support groups, friends and family. When support is provided to a breastfeeding mother, she will be encouraged to provide a golden start for her child by breastfeeding. And by doing so, everyone wins!

Infants are meant to be breastfed. Breastfeeding provides the best possible start in life in all areas of development. Even in developed countries, lack of breastfeeding is associated with an increase risk to the survival and health of babies. Artificial feeding is associated with a higher rate of deaths in babies. Early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding can save more than one million babies. Compared with children who are exclusively breastfed, those who are artificially fed have poorer health, higher mortality rates and lower IQ scores.

Mothers and communities also benefit when babies are breastfed. Breast cancer is more common in mothers who either haven't breastfed or breastfed for a short time. Menstrual periods return earlier for mothers who don't breastfeed and this can lead to closer pregnancies, and increased health problems in mothers and babies. Exclusive breastfeeding leads to decreased economic cost for families, communities, the health system, and the environment.

In short, as quoted by a Sudanese breastfeeding support advocate “Breastfeeding a baby is a community concern; a celebratory occasion – everyone has a role to make it successful. A breastfeeding friendly environment needs supportive people in every corner.”

For further information,
Julianna Lim Abdullah
International WBW Coordinator
Tel: (604) 658 4816
Fax: (604) 657 2655
Email: waba@streamyx.com
www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/ UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Action Food Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). For more information, please contact: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) • P.O.Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia • Tel: 60-4-6584816 • Fax: 60-4-6572655 • Email: waba@streamyx.com • Website: www.waba.org.my