



international pediatric association
association internationale de pédiatrie
asociación internacional de pediatria

World Breast Feeding Week August 2009

Support for Breast Feeding from The International Pediatric Association

Acknowledging the 2009 Breast Feeding Week, the International Pediatric Association (IPA) reinforces its commitment to promote breastfeeding by all women from all countries and socioeconomic groups, and in all circumstances including times of disaster and emergency as highlighted by the theme "Breastfeeding is a Vital Emergency Response". IPA is committed to the protection and promotion of health for all children everywhere. We address this goal by fostering best practices which enhance child health, practises based on sound scientific reasearch and evidence based experience. IPA acknowledges that breast milk is the most critical nutritional need for all infants. Ideally breastfeeding should be "exclusive" for 6 months and continued with complementary foods as appropriate to the mother's circumstances, generally encompassing a period of 18 to 24 months. Feeding of infants by mothers infected with HIV has been an area of particular concern. When mothers in developing countries avoid breastfeeding to prevent HIV transmission to their infants, their infants are at risk for growth retardation, malnutrition, diarrhea, and death from causes other than HIV infection. Accumulating scientific evidence indicates that appropriate diagnosis and treatment of HIV infected mothers and their infants can not only preserve maternal health, but also prevent mother to infant transmission of infection in nearly all instances.

Unfortunately, promotion of breast feeding worldwide continues to be undermined by the unrestrained marketing of formula milks by their manufacturers in violation of the Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, the international document adopted by the 1981 World Health Assembly and formally signed and implemented by many of the world's countries. IPA has been concerned for years that the prominent public image of manufacturers of infant foods implies a relationship with the profession of pediatrics which compromises the IPA commitment to promotion of breastfeeding. In 2007 at its triennial meeting, the IPA Council of Delegates resolved unanimously that the IPA fully subscribe to the Code and encourage its Member Societies to do the same. The IPA remains firmly committed to these principles.

IPA has been concerned by a number of recent articles in the lay press (including the London Times, Atlantic Monthly, and New York Times) indicating that breast feeding can be inconvenient for mothers and that the scientific evidence for superiority of breast milk to any known artificial formula is weak. We note that available evidence for the superiority of breast milk is backed by sound scientific studies. We recognize that some mothers are unable to or unwilling to breast feed, and advise that each mother be presented with the best available evidence on infant feeding and encouraged to make her informed choice on how best to feed her baby. Noting that many mothers must return to work during the 6 month recommended period of "exclusive" breast feeding; we support efforts to achieve national policy regulations which address this difficult issue.

IPA congratulates WABA and its partners on the annual promotion of Breast Feeding Week. Our IPA motto is Healthy Children for a Healthy World. The best start for a healthy life for each and every child begins with exclusive breast milk feeding for the first 6 months of life. We look forward to a world where this is possible for all of the world's mothers and children.

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