

Exclusive Breastfeeding : the Gold Standard

SAFE, SOUND, SUSTAINABLE

World Breastfeeding Week
1-7 August



Latancia Materna - Ministerio de Salud Pública, Ecuador

The Golden Bow is a symbol for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding. One loop represents the mother, the other represents the child. The knot symbolises the father, family and society who play a pivotal role in creating a conducive environment for breastfeeding. The gold colour shows that breastfeeding is the gold standard for infant feeding. The Golden Bow is a joint outreach initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WABA. Wear it proudly, and tell everyone who asks of its many meanings! For more information, visit www.unicef.org and www.waba.org.my/forum2/goldenbow.html.

JANUARY							FEBRUARY						
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NOVEMBER							DECEMBER							
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2004

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global alliance of individuals, networks and organisations that protect, promote and support breastfeeding based on the Innocenti Declaration and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International, the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and LINKAGES.

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WORLD ALLIANCE FOR
BREASTFEEDING ACTION

Exclusive Breastfeeding: the Gold Standard

SAFE, SOUND, SUSTAINABLE

In 2002, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* which calls upon all governments and other actors:

"to ensure that all health and other relevant sectors protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continued breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond, while providing women access to the support that they require – in the family, the community and the workplace – to achieve this goal".

This year's WBW aims to stimulate activity worldwide to get more people to understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and to think of ways to enable and empower mothers to do it. The context for this is the new Global Strategy which many people are beginning to implement.

Exclusive breastfeeding for six months means that the infant receives only breastmilk, from his or her mother or a wet nurse, or expressed breastmilk, and no other foods or drinks with the exception of drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, mineral supplements, or medicines during this time.

After six months, breastfeeding should continue for two years or more, with complementary foods.

Exclusive breastfeeding is:

- ★ **SAFE** because it contains protective factors which help to prevent and fight infections, such as diarrhoea and pneumonia, and reduce the risk of allergic conditions, particularly asthma.
- ★ **SOUND** because nutrients in breastmilk are present in the right *quantity* and they are of special *quality*. Formula and other foods contain nutrients in different amounts, and of very different quality.
- ★ **SUSTAINABLE** because it helps a household's food security. So long as an infant's mother, or a wet nurse, is there, breastmilk is available. A woman can make good milk from any mixture of foods, however simple.

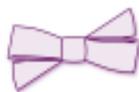
Most babies are not exclusively breastfed. On average, globally, only 39 percent of babies breastfeed exclusively, even in the first four months of life. However, breastmilk can provide all that babies normally need for the first six months of life, including all the water, even in very hot climates. To ensure that her baby gets enough milk, a mother needs to:

- ★ Be confident that she can do it, and that her milk is the safest and soundest for her baby;
- ★ Start breastfeeding soon after delivery, to stimulate milk production;
- ★ Know how to make sure that her baby is *properly attached* to the breast, so that the baby can *suckle effectively*;
- ★ Let the baby suckle frequently – whenever he or she wants to – both day and night.

This is called *demand feeding*, or *baby-led feeding*;

- ★ Let the baby continue suckling for as long as he or she wants, at each feed.

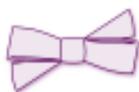
A baby who has other feeds is less hungry, and takes less breastmilk. Then the breasts produce less milk. The other feeds do not increase a baby's intake: they *replace* breastmilk.



Achieving the Gold Standard - mothers can do it with help and support!

Accurate knowledge, a supportive environment, and confidence are major factors which enable mothers to breastfeed successfully.

- ★ **Policy makers** should ensure that policies follow the Global Strategy, and support exclusive breastfeeding;
- ★ **Health care providers** should implement the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and ensure that mothers receive counselling mothers about breastfeeding, before, during and after delivery;
- ★ **The community, employers and families** need to understand about exclusive breastfeeding, and how to support mothers to achieve it;
- ★ **Other mothers** can give mother-to-mother support. Mothers, acting together, can help to change community attitudes.



Preparing for WBW

In preparation for WBW activities, you may want to start with some of the following:

- ★ Find out how many mothers breastfeed exclusively in your country or district;
- ★ Find out if there have been any meetings about the Global Strategy, and if there are any plans to implement it in the country;
- ★ Talk to some mothers in hospitals, clinics, the community, or your workplace, about their experiences;
- ★ Talk to any doctors or other health workers you know and ask them about exclusive breastfeeding and the Global Strategy;
- ★ Learn more about the Global Strategy at <www.who.int/gb/EB_WHA/PDF/WHA55/ea5515.pdf>.

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global people's initiative to protect, promote and support breastfeeding based on the Innocenti Declaration and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

SPONSORSHIP: WABA *does not* accept sponsorship of any kind from companies producing breastmilk substitutes, related equipment and complementary foods. WABA encourages all participants of World Breastfeeding Week to respect and follow this ethical stance.