

INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING

Children need nutrients for energy, body building and body protection. The period from conception to two years of age is a critical period of growth. Mothers with support from family and health care providers play a key role in ensuring effective child feeding. Children who are **feeding adequately gain weight as expected** which is one the indicators of proper child growth and development in addition to timely attainment of development milestones like crawling, sitting and walking.

Proper feeding for infants is; **breast feeding exclusively till 6 months of age and introducing soft foods at 6 months and continue breast feeding to 2 years or more.**

Exclusive breastfeeding for infants from birth to 6 months of age.

Breast milk is the perfect and complete food for infant's first 6 months of life; as it is a complete source of nutrients, easily digested and contains antibodies in addition to breastfeeding your child helping with bonding, cost friendly and being beneficial to mother's health.

Health workers should support mother to initiate breast feeding within an hour of delivery.

Proper Breast Feeding

- ✓ Sit up straight and hold baby close to the breast.
- ✓ Ensure correct attachment to the breast.
- ✓ Breastfeed the baby for about fifteen minutes at each breast.
- ✓ Breast feeding for adequate time per breast is advised as breast milk is comprised of fore milk which comes in the first minutes of feeding (provides most nutrients and quenches) baby's thirst and later hind milk which looks more concentrated than the fore milk. Hind milk contains more fat, providing more energy hence both provide optimum nutrition for the baby who suckles for long on one breast per feed.
- ✓ Breastfeed the child eight to twelve times per day, including night time.
- ✓ Emptying each breast and frequent breast feeding increases breast milk supply.

There is improved knowledge about the benefits of breast feeding today however with the increased number of working mothers with only 3 months of maternal leave, it becomes hard for majority to breastfeed their children exclusively for 6 months.

What then are the infant feeding options for the baby with no access to breast-milk?

Breast milk is the best feed therefore when adequate breastfeeding is not possible, mothers are advised to use expressed breast milk.

1. **Expressed breast milk;** mothers can express breast milk by hand or using a pump. Expressed breast milk is the better feed in comparison to infant formula and cow's milk. It also helps to keep up the breast milk supply.

Express as much breast milk before you go for work and while at work to avoid leaking.

Expressed breast milk can be stored in the in a clean place at room temperature for 8 hours and in a refrigerator for 24 hours.

Continue breastfeeding your baby at night, in the early morning and at any time you are home.

2. **Infant formula:** Commercial infant formula feeds are manufactured from cow's milk and fortified with nutrients in an effort to provide nutrients as in human breast milk. Breast milk is the best and natural nutrient formula for infants and there is no need to use infant formula when breast milk can be provided. Infant formula doesn't have antibodies.

Mix infant formula feeds following the instructions on the tin. Ensure correct measurements as feeds should not be dilute (provides less nutrients resulting in low weight gain) or too concentrated (causes constipation and excessive energy intake resulting in excessive weight gain).

3. **Cow milk** is the option to infant feeding, when breast milk cannot be provided and infant formula is not affordable and accessible for the mother. However the protein in cow milk is hard to digest for the infant as compared to the protein in breast milk.

Below 4 Months; dilute one cup of milk with half cup water and add a teaspoon of sugar, to ease digestibility.



Above 4 Months; the baby can take undiluted milk as they have a higher nutrient need.

Provide drinking water after feed to avoid constipation.

*Hygiene is key for all feeding bottles and tits; wash bottles and tits thoroughly and boil them in water for ten minutes daily.



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FEEDING CHILDREN AT 6 MONTHS TO 2 YEARS OLD.

Complementary feeding: Gradual introduction of soft foods with continued breastfeeding till 2 years or beyond.

At 6 months as the breast milk is no longer sufficient to attain proper growth and development. Failure to provide well balanced nutritious meals adequate, safe and appropriately fed to the child may result in weight loss.

✓ Provide balanced meals and choose a variety of foods.

The child's diet should comprise;

- Body building foods (proteins) as the largest portion on the plate or cup to meet growth requirements. These include; milk, eggs, meat, fish, mukene, beans, peas, groundnuts
- Energy foods like; irish potatoes, matooke, rice, maize, millet
- Iron rich foods like beans, liver, eggs, bugga and millet. Pairing vitamin c rich foods (orange, tomato, guava, pineapple and papaya) with iron rich foods enhances absorption of iron.
- Vegetables and fruits help to provide vitamins and minerals to boost immunity against infections and healthy eyes

✓ Provide thick foods as the small quantity the child eats should be rich in nutrients.

Note: children have the ability stop eating when satisfied and are not expected to eat same quantities of food as adults. There is a tendency of mothers/ care-takers to over feed children at this stage which is associated with higher rates of childhood obesity.

Baby food options;

- Liquid foods like porridges (rice millet, soy and maize), fish, bean soups, milk tea, and fruit juices except lemons as they are bitter tasting.
- Mashed foods; egg yolk, irish, pumpkin, fish, matooke, beans
- Black tea, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits are not ideal infant feeds. These satisfy the child without providing the appropriate nutrients as they are high in energy with minimal or no protein which is much required for the growing infant.

- ✓ Give small frequent meals.

Age	Meals per day	Average Amount a child can eat per meal
6-8 months	4-5	2-3 tablespoons per feed gradually increasing to ½ a 250ml cup
9-11 months	5-6	½ a 250ml cup
12-23 months	5-6	¾ to a full 250ml cup

Sample Meal Plan for a child 6 to 23 months

Meal	Breakfast	Snack	Lunch	Snack	Supper
Dish	Thick millet-soy-rice porridge with milk or nkejje powder	Banana/ Watermelon / banana	Mashed irish potato Mashed beans-no husk/ fish Avocado Fruit juice	Milk tea/ Porridge	Matooke Groundnuts paste with a tea spoon powdered mukene Steamed Buga Passion fruit juice
Frequent breastfeeding between meal times or expressed breast milk					

FEEDING CHILDREN EXPOSED TO HIV

Pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers should go for HIV testing at each pregnancy.

HIV positive mothers should see a health care provider for infant feeding guidelines. Mothers attending prevention of mother to child HIV transmission clinics are taught how to strictly exclusively breast feed their children for six months irrespective of the child's HIV status and to introduce soft foods at 6 months and continue breast feeding till one year of age.

The mother should be taking their ARVs effectively.