

What is exclusive breastfeeding?

Exclusive breastfeeding is defined as giving only breastmilk with no supplementation of any type (no water, no juice, no non-human milk, no formula milk, no soft porridge, no yoghurt and no soft foods) except for medication prescribed by a doctor / health care worker when medically indicated.

What are the key benefits of breastfeeding for the baby?

- Breast milk provides all the nutrients your baby needs to grow and develop for the first six months. It also continues to provide most of the nutrients your baby needs from 6 to 12 months.
- Breast milk contains antibodies that help strengthen the immune system of the baby and helps prevent common illnesses such as diarrhoea and pneumonia.
- Breastfed babies are less likely to have respiratory and middle-ear infections than formula fed babies.
- Breast milk contains special substances that keep the gut lining strong, which helps in reducing chances of infection.
- Colostrum (the first milk the baby gets just after birth) is regarded as the first immunization. This milk is rich in protective substances and is vital for the baby who has now made a transition from being protected in the womb to being exposed to all sorts of infections in the environment once it is born.
- The baby cannot get these protective substances from any other form of feeding.
- Breast milk is the best way to feed a baby and is the best gift the mother can give to her child to start life well equipped in order to survive diseases and infections.

Does breastfeeding have any benefits to the mother?

- Breastfeeding also benefits the mother's health. It may reduce the risks of breast and ovarian cancer later in life.
- Breastfeeding helps women return to their pre-pregnancy weight faster if they exclusively breastfeed and provided that they do not over eat during the breastfeeding period.

Can mothers still breastfeed if they are HIV positive?

- Breastfeeding is encouraged for HIV-positive and HIV-negative mothers.
- Find out your HIV status, it is important to know your status so that you can give your baby the maximum protection against HIV.
- If you are HIV positive both you and your baby will need to take antiretroviral treatment (ARVs).
- Although HIV positive women who are breastfeeding should be on ARVs, if you are breastfeeding but are not on ARVs,

your baby will receive nevirapine syrup once a day until one week after you stop breastfeeding.

- If you are breastfeeding and taking ARVs, your baby will receive at least nevirapine once a day for six weeks. The doctor or nurse may also give you other ARVs for the baby, or you may have to give the nevirapine for more than six weeks.
- Remember to get an HIV-PCR test for your baby at 6 weeks, and again 6 weeks after stopping breastfeeding. Some babies may also have to test at other times, your doctor or nurse will give you more information. Always make sure you know when next to test your baby
- If you only started ARVs after delivery the baby will get nevirapine syrup for more than six weeks.



Every mother breastfeeding her baby should know her HIV status.

When should mothers start with breastfeeding?

- Breastfeeding should start immediately and preferably at least within the 1st hour of birth.

Why is it important to start immediately or within the 1st hour after birth?

- This helps the mother to start producing milk.
- At this point, babies are most eager to feed.
- Early initiation of breastfeeding helps regulate the baby's temperature and blood sugar level.
- This also helps the mother and baby to start bonding.

How often and for how long should I breastfeed my baby?

- A small baby needs to be fed often both day and night. Letting the baby feed as frequently as he/she wants helps to make more breast milk. This is called demand feeding.
- During a feed a baby needs to be left to feed for as long as they want. At the beginning of each feed, the early milk called the foremilk, contains enough water to satisfy the baby's thirst, even in hot weather. The milk that follows (hind milk) provides a higher amount of important fats that are more concentrated at the end of a breastfeed.
- Let the baby finish the first side of the breast and offer the second side if he/she wants more breast milk.
- A baby may feed at least 8 -12 times per day.
- The frequency of feeding should not be scheduled or limited.

Why babies should not be given any other foods before six months (mixed feeding)?

- Other foods do not provide all the important nutrients found in breast milk that the baby needs for its growth and development in the first six months of life.
- Other foods may be contaminated with germs that could cause diarrhoea or other illnesses.
- Other foods such as (porridge, water, tea, juice, and formula milk) during the first six months may damage the baby's young intestines and make it easy for infections (including HIV) to get into the baby's body.
- Breast milk is gentle and does not irritate a baby's sensitive stomach lining for the first six months.
- Breast milk is produced on demand, the more the mother breastfeeds, the more milk she produces.

For more information: www.hivsa.com



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What YOU need to know about...

Exclusive breastfeeding

