

Breastfeeding is Emergency Preparedness



BREASTFEEDING IS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

PREGNANCY - BIRTH - INFANT & YOUNG CHILD FEEDING

PREGNANCY

Prepare by learning about breastfeeding. You can make 'breastfriends' by joining an online mother/peer support group, where you can receive encouragement and information. La Leche League International (LLLI) has support groups, and is an organisation that has evidence-based information, freely available online. Looking for support? You can find trained LLL leaders on their website under 'Get Help' - see 'SUPPORT' section.



BIRTH

For the health and well-being of you and your baby, breastfeed within the first hour. Continue safe skin-to-skin contact for at least 90 minutes, the more the better. Skin-to-skin contact at birth means your naked baby on your bare chest. If cold, cover baby's back with a clean dry blanket and ensure their airway is clear (don't cover baby's face). Skin-to-skin contact has benefits for all babies and young children, not just at birth.



BREASTFEEDING

During emergencies; continue breastfeeding, avoid weaning, and reach out for support, encouragement and information (see 'SUPPORT' section for details).





MIXED/FORMULA FEEDING

Formula fed babies can be safely CUP fed at any age. Bottles are difficult to clean, and carry a risk of causing infection. Cups are easy to wash and keep clean. Consider relactation to establish breastfeeding, especially during emergencies. Evidence-based instructional information on safe cup feeding and relactation help can be found on links in 'SUPPORT' section.



STRESS REDUCTION - PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL



Stress Reduction for Mother-Child

Breastfeeding and Skin-to-Skin Contact (SSC) releases Oxytocin, a hormone that helps both mothers and babies feel calm and relaxed, even in times of crisis. SSC helps stabilise baby's respiration, heart-rate, temperature and blood sugars. A small baby can destabilise when separated from their care-giver, resulting in rapid heart rate and rapid breathing, and the burning of precious calories. SSC conserves energy for healthy weight gain, and growth, keeping babies thriving. Breastfeeding and SSC are a combination, which has been scientifically found to have life long physiological, psychological, educational and economic benefits.

SECURITY



Nutrition, Immunity Protection & Defence

Breastfeeding is food security for babies. Breast milk also contains antibodies that protect babies and young children from viruses and bacteria. Formula has no antibodies.

In emergencies, stopping breastfeeding and turning to formula can put babies and young children at risk of food insecurity, as well as respiratory and diarrhoeal infections.

Formula may not be sustainable for mothers with a low income. During emergencies, even mothers with a high income may struggle to find formula in stores.

Consider reaching out for support on relactation and safe cup feeding of formula (see 'SUPPORT' section).

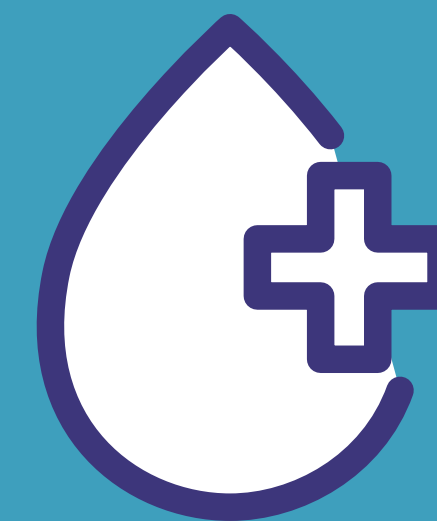
INCREASE BREAST MILK SUPPLY

Milk Supply - Common Concern in Emergencies

Your milk production is based on 'supply & demand'. This means the more frequently you breastfeed, the more milk your body makes. So breastfeed as often as you can. Breastfeeding during the night, when the hormone Prolactin is highest, ensures your body will make lots of milk. A deep latch and good positioning of your baby are important in milk production and supply - "Nipple to Nose - Tummy to Mummy".

Lots of skin-to-skin contact helps release Oxytocin, which triggers the let down of milk from the breast. Full breasts send a signal to slow milk production down, so the more often your baby feeds and takes milk from your breasts, the more milk you will produce.

Gentle breast compressions with your hand while baby feeds can boost supply, and help baby gain weight if needed.



MATERNAL HEALTH

It's not just about babies and young children - Mothers benefit too!

Breastfeeding provides women with both short-term and long-term health and well-being benefits. It reduces risks of post-natal depression and non-communicable diseases, including maternal cancers. Exclusive breastfeeding, both day and night, for the first 6 months, suppresses ovulation. This is called 'lactation amenorrhea'. It is a delay in menstruation, and if certain conditions are followed (seek support for more details), it is 98% effective in naturally preventing pregnancy, plus leads to significant risk reductions in breast and ovarian cancers. Longer duration of breastfeeding results in a significant risk reduction of breast cancer. Each year of breastfeeding is associated with a 4.3% decrease in breast cancer risk.

Whether facing emergencies or not, it's worth continuing breastfeeding for as long as you can, especially if there is a family history of breast cancer.





NURTURING CARE

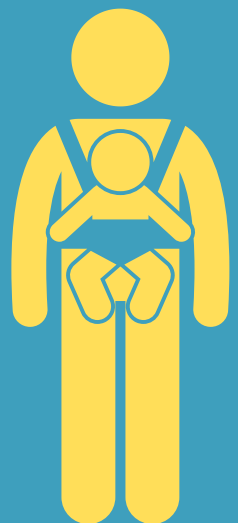
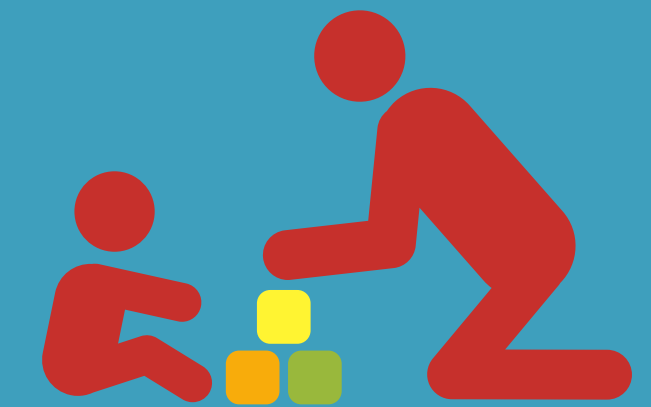
Breastfeeding & Skin-to-Skin Contact are Evidence-Based Supportive-Parenting 'tools'. 'If in doubt whip it out - Breastfeed!'



Breastfeeding is more than just about nutrition, and Skin-to-Skin Contact (SSC) is more than just about stabilising babies. They are evidence-based 'tools' that help in developing the human brain - nurturing healthy attachment and helping babies and young children not only to survive, but thrive.



In emergencies, it's a good idea to feed more frequently - for comfort and connection. Use responsive care - play, have lots of eye contact, hum, talk, and sing with your baby/child. Breathe out stress, and breathe in the sweet smell of your baby. Have lots and lots of hugs. Prolonged crying uses up precious calories and hinders healthy brain development. SSC and breastfeeding helps calm a crying baby. Partners can do safe SSC too!



Carrying baby in a safe wrap/carrier enables your hands to be free to do other things. And even better, if you can do skin to skin while carrying baby, you will automatically make more milk on the move, and bond with baby.

SUPPORT - Breastfeeding is a Team Effort!

For support, information and/or encouragement, reach out to a Mother Support Breastfeeding Counsellor or Certified Lactation Specialist. Many provide free online help through private Facebook groups, email, phone and/or video calls. La Leche League have volunteers around the world, and are partners of WHO and UNICEF. Their website provides evidence-based information with subject search features and details of where to find help. Go to: www.llli.org

Mothers that are currently mixed feeding or formula feeding can establish breastfeeding, through a process called 'relactation' (or 'induced lactation' for mothers who have not given birth). The key is support, determination and perseverance - reach out for breastfeeding support such as www.llli.org
Information can also be found from online resources - KellyMom. <https://kellymom.com/ages/adopt-relactate/relactation-resources/>

If you are healthy, consider supporting other mothers and their babies with wet-nursing, or donating your extra breast milk to a milk bank.

See also -

World Health Organization: Infant Feeding in Emergencies : A Guide for Mothers.
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/107984>

Cup Feeding Poster: <https://www.llli.org/cup-feeding/>



A large, solid red heart is centered on a solid blue background. Inside the heart, the words "YOU GOT THIS!" are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is centered horizontally and vertically within the heart's shape.

YOU GOT THIS!