Breastfeeding in the Global Context

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Relative Risk for Mortality (0-1 Month) by Breastfeeding, Pelotas, Brazil

Victora et al. Lancet 1997;Aug;8:319-21

Suboptimal breastfeeding increases the risk of malnutrition and illness

- What is optimal?
  - Early initiation: within first hour
  - Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months
  - Continued breastfeeding for at least 1 year

Promotion of exclusive breastfeeding could save more child lives than any other known health intervention.

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• Breastmilk contains all essential nutrients.
• Breastmilk also contains immunological substances. Mother’s milk protects babies from most diseases that the mother is exposed to.
• Breastmilk is clean. It thus protects babies from environmental pathogens.
• Breastfeeding is economical.

Lactation terminology

• Lactation — Physiological process of milk production
• Breastfeeding — Complex behavior pattern surrounding lactation by which mother’s milk is obtained by the infant
  — Exclusive breastfeeding: human milk is the infant’s sole source of nutrients and water
Oxytocin
Muscle-contracting hormone
Triggered by suckling or by thoughts
Social threats to breastfeeding

- Trends of modernization and westernization
- Aggressive advertising by formula companies
- Lack of support systems for working mothers

Biological threats to breastfeeding

- HIV transmission through breastfeeding creates a difficult dilemma. *(More to come on that. . . .)*
- Some environmental toxins, especially lipid-soluble ones, are secreted in milk
- Some nutrient deficiencies in mothers cause low-nutrient milk
  - Vitamin A
  - Iodine
  - B vitamins
- Nonetheless, breast milk is still by far the best food for babies in nearly all circumstances
10 steps to successful breastfeeding

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within half an hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they should be separated from their infants.


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10 steps to successful breastfeeding, cont.

6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming-in; that is, allow mothers and infants to remain together - 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.


Global Coverage

Most babies in the world are breastfed for one year or longer. But most are not exclusively breastfed for 6 months.

Peer counseling is an effective strategy

% EBF at 6 mo

Intervention  Control

Burkina Faso

Uganda

South Africa

Rural Bangladesh, 12 visits

3-Country study, 5 visits

Proven child survival interventions reviewed in 2002

Jones et al., Lancet 2003; 362:65

Yleskor et al., Lancet 2011; 378:420
Ghana is one country that is moving forward with strong breastfeeding policies and interventions at a national level.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O8nlVMgl_c&feature=relmfu