

Exclusive Breastfeeding: the Gold Standard

SAFE, SOUND, SUSTAINABLE



THE GOLDEN BOW

is a symbol for the "Gold Standard", that is the ideal, of exclusive and continued breastfeeding.

One loop represents the mother and the other represents the child. The knot symbolises the father, family and society which support them. One of the ends is for timely complementary food after six months, the other is for the use of family planning to space births three to five years apart.

The Golden Bow is a joint outreach initiative of UNICEF and WABA. Wear it proudly and tell others of its many meanings.

For more information, visit <<http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/bow.htm>> and <www.waba.org.my/forum2/goldenbow.html>.

Exclusive breastfeeding is the safe, sound, and sustainable way to feed an infant for the first six months of life. But breastfeeding is important for more than six months. WHO and UNICEF recommend that breastfeeding should continue with appropriate complementary foods up to two years or beyond¹. Babies grow and develop best when they are fed in this way. Mothers can achieve both exclusive and continued breastfeeding when they know how valuable it is, when they know how to do it, and when they are given the necessary support.



2004

Experts now agree that breastmilk can provide all that a baby normally needs for the first six months and no extra drinks or feeds are needed during this period^{2,3}. *Exclusive breastfeeding 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*⁴.

Many mothers find that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is quite simple. They do not need to worry whether the baby is getting enough to eat or drink or whether it is the right thing and there is none of the inconvenience or expense of preparing other unnecessary feeds.

Unfortunately, in many countries, exclusive breastfeeding is rare. So this year's World Breastfeeding Week aims to help everyone to understand about exclusive breastfeeding, to believe in its benefits, and to find ways to support and encourage mothers to do it.

Exclusive Breastfeeding... it's safe

Breastmilk is so much more than a food. It is a live tissue with many immune factors which give a baby *continuous, active protection* against infections, when the baby's body cannot yet protect itself⁵. For the first few days after birth, a mother provides the ideal immunization for her baby with *colostrum* which is very rich in antibodies. The amount of colostrum is small, but it is exactly what a baby needs at this time. Exclusively breastfed children are much healthier. Artificially fed and mixed-fed infants are sick more often with diarrhoea, pneumonia and other infections⁶.

Exclusive breastfeeding... it's sound

Breastmilk contains just the right *amount* of energy, protein, vitamins and other nutrients for a baby for the first six months of life⁷, and all the water that a baby needs too⁸. The nutrients are of perfect *quality* for a baby, and they are more easily and completely digested than any other milk or food. When they are older, breastfed babies are less likely to be overweight than artificially fed babies; they have fewer allergies and higher scores on intelligence tests⁶.

Exclusive breastfeeding... it's sustainable

A mother can ensure continuity of good milk from any mixture of foods that she eats, however simple. There is no need to worry about the cost of formula or other milk. The cost of extra food for her is small.

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