

# BREASTFEEDING AND FAMILY FOODS: Loving & Healthy

## VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

When young children are fed vegetarian or vegan diets, careful attention needs to be given to ensure they receive enough nutrients. Egg, legumes, nut pastes or milk products need to be given with the staple at every meal. Depending on the diet, supplements or locally available fortified foods containing iron, zinc and other nutrients, will probably be required (essential, plus vitamin B<sub>12</sub> for vegans).

## MEALS & SNACKS

- 'Meals' are occasions for feeding combinations of foods for example, meat/pulses, staple and vegetable.
- 'Snacks' should be nutritious foods that are convenient and easy to prepare and which babies can feed themselves, for example, pieces of fruit, bread and peanut butter, pieces of cheese.

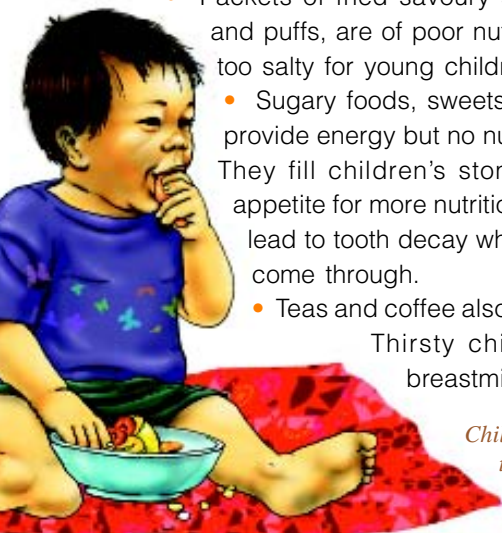
## GIVING THE BEST BITS OF FAMILY FOODS

Compared with older family members, young children need proportionately more of the meat, pulses, milk products, and vegetables and less of the 'staple' - rice, maize etc. These can be mashed and softened as necessary with a little expressed breastmilk, cooking water, yoghurt or cows' milk. Young children need the solid or semi-solid parts, rather than the liquid of any sauce, soup or stew; mashed or cut up as needed. In some circumstances, families may prefer to prepare separate nutritious foods specifically for babies 6-12 months old.

## FOODS WHICH ARE BEST AVOIDED:

- Packets of fried savoury snacks, such as crisps and puffs, are of poor nutritional value and much too salty for young children.
- Sugary foods, sweets, fizzy drinks and colas provide energy but no nutrients (empty calories). They fill children's stomachs and lower their appetite for more nutritious foods. They can also lead to tooth decay when babies' teeth start to come through.
- Teas and coffee also fill children's stomachs. Thirsty children can be offered breastmilk or plain boiled water.

*Children will learn to feed themselves sooner if feeding is enjoyable.*



## COMMERCIAL INFANT FORMULA & COWS' MILK

In some communities, the first 'other food' given to breastfed babies is commercial infant formula. This is often in the mistaken belief that formula, or 'follow-on formula' which is marketed as suitable for babies from 6 months, is better than other foods. Slogans on the tins such as "better growth and development", and "enriched with iron and vitamins" help to create this impression. There is no need to give infant formula or cows' milk as a drink to children 6-24 months who are breastfeeding on demand. The formula/milk simply replaces breastmilk and introduces an unnecessary risk of illness. However, it is useful to give milk products, (yoghurt or cheese), or use cows' milk or milk powder to mix with other foods to ensure children get enough calcium. This is particularly important when children are not consuming animal-source foods regularly.

## COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS

Commercially made baby foods, which are properly fortified with suitable amounts of added vitamins and minerals are convenient and can be helpful. They are usually quick and easy to prepare, but they are often an expensive means of feeding young children and may contain inappropriate fillers and additives.

## THE 'INTERNATIONAL CODE & COMPLEMENTARY FOODS

World Health Assembly resolutions, which have the same status as the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, give clear guidance on the promotion of complementary foods and drinks:

- ❖ They should not be used or marketed in ways that undermine breastfeeding (WHA 49.15 1996). This applies throughout the period when breastfeeding would normally be continued.
- ❖ They should not be labelled, advertised or commercially promoted as being suitable for infants under 6 months (WHA 39.28 1986, WHA 54.2 2001).
- ❖ Initiatives to improve complementary feeding should recommend the widest possible use of indigenous nutrient-rich food stuffs (WHA 54.2 2001).