

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. Optimal breastfeeding together with complementary feeding help prevent malnutrition and can save about a million child lives. Globally less than 40% of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed. Adequate breastfeeding support for mothers and families could save many young lives.

WHO actively promotes breastfeeding as the best source of nourishment for infants and young children. This fact file explores the many benefits of the practice, and how robust help for mothers can increase breastfeeding worldwide.

Breastfeeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Virtually all mothers can breastfeed, provided they have accurate information, and the support of their family, the health care system and society at large.

Colostrum, the yellowish, sticky breast milk produced at the end of pregnancy, is recommended by WHO as the perfect food for the newborn, and feeding should be initiated within the first hour after birth.

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended up to 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond.

<http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>

QUESTIONS: (EXPRESS YOURSELF)

- 1. How important is breastfeeding?**
- 2. Up to what age can a baby stay well nourished by just being breastfed?**
- 3. Why is it that breastfeeding should be initiated within the first hour after birth?**
- 4. What health benefits can the infant get during breastfeeding?**
- 5. What health benefits can mothers get during breastfeeding?**
- 6. ROLE PLAY: As a health practitioner, how will you promote breastfeeding in your community/country? If I'm a mother, how will you convince me to have breastfeeding?**