

Feeding Babies and Young Children: Key points for helpers

Remember:

Babies and children under 2 years are particularly vulnerable in emergencies.

What worked at home – for you or refugees – may not be safe in emergency situations. Try not to let your personal experiences influence you.

Breastfeeding saves lives in emergency situations. Mothers must be encouraged and supported to continue to breastfeed until the child is 2 years old.

Stress, exhaustion, illness and dehydration will NOT dry up a mother's milk supply, but may make her FEEL that it has. Encourage mothers to continue breastfeeding.

If a mother is mix-feeding (both breastfeeding and formula) or has stopped breastfeeding within the last 2 weeks, she should be encouraged to return to exclusive breastfeeding by putting the baby to the breast frequently 2-3 hourly and topping up with formula AFTER a breastfeed.

Babies under 6 months need breast or formula milk.

Babies over 6 months (if not breastfed) can be fed full-fat animal (cow or goat) milk including UHT plus complementary foods. Toddler formula is unnecessary.

Preparing infant formula:

Ready to use formula is safest. Powdered formula is not sterile, may be contaminated and requires careful preparation.

Bottles harbor germs. Cups are easier to clean or disposable cups can be given. All babies can feed from cups but may not be used to this.

All feeding utensils must be scrupulously cleaned.

Bottles or cups should be washed in hot soapy water before being sterilized.

Formula powder should ideally be made with boiled water over 70 degrees C to kill bacteria that may be present in the water or the powder.

Formula feeds should not be prepared in advance. If there is no other option, they should be cooled in the fridge before taking out. Feeds can then be kept in a cool bag with an ice block for 4 hours max, or in a bag for 2 hours max.

Get more info and the Feeding Your Baby As You Travel flyer to give parents the info they need at: www.ennonline.net/guidelinesycffeedingsupporttransit