

# Guidance for organizations supporting the feeding of children aged 6-months to 2-years in the context of the Ukraine crisis

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*This brief provides guidance for organizations to appropriately assist with the provision of food for children aged from 6-months to 2-years, to support their nutrient needs for health, growth and development.<sup>1</sup>*

## Why is it important to support appropriate nutrition of children aged 6-months to 2-years in the current context?

**Children 6-months to 2-years need adequate feeding to ensure growth.** The complementary feeding period is a critical period of child development characterized by rapid growth and high nutritional needs. Exclusive breastfeeding is vital for children aged under 6-months, providing protection from illness and optimal nutrition for growth and development.

Around the age of 6-months, a child's energy and nutrients needs starts to exceed what is provided by breast milk alone; therefore, adequate foods are necessary to meet those needs along with continued breastfeeding to age 2-years, or beyond. Children need adequate quantities of good quality, diverse foods to support their healthy development and avoid deterioration of their nutritional status and becoming ill.

**Children 6-months to 2-years are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions caused by the crisis in Ukraine.** In the current context, a large number of parents and families may not be able to meet the specific food needs of their young children either because the markets do not have the variety of foods required for this age group, the shops are no longer functioning due to the insecurity, or the family does not have the means to purchase or to prepare food.

### Recommendations for the feeding of children 6-months to 2-years

- ⇒ Breastmilk is the only nutrition required by a child for the first 6-months of life. It remains a critical source of high-quality nutrients and energy for the vast majority of children aged 6-months to 2-years, or older.
- ⇒ Starting at 6-months of age, a variety of age-appropriate, nutrient-dense and safe foods, in addition to breastmilk (or infant formula), should be introduced and fed frequently, to provide for the high age-specific requirements for young children's health, growth and development.<sup>2</sup>
- ⇒ Gently and patiently encourage feeding without using force.

<sup>1</sup> The document complements the multi-agency [Joint Statement version 2 on Protecting Infant and Young Child Nutrition in the Ukraine Conflict and Refugee Crisis](#). The document does not aim at providing guidance on food assistance for families. For guidance refer to the Ukraine [Food Security Cluster](#).

<sup>2</sup> Introducing other foods before age 6-months increases the risk of infection, not being safely swallowed and digested well, & decreases the intake of breast milk; delaying introduction may increase the risk of illness, growth faltering, micronutrient deficiencies.

## Ways agencies can support the feeding of children aged 6-months to 2-years in the current context

### 1. Consider these contextual factors when providing food assistance

The provision of foods should be contextual, considering the most nutritious, appropriate, safe and feasible options, taking into account the following:

- Availability of a variety of nutrient-rich foods in the market, safely accessible
- Cultural appropriateness and acceptability for the age group
- Access to fuel, equipment, utensils and facilities to prepare and eat food
- Access to clean water for drinking and food preparation
- Environmental cleanliness for hygienic food storage and preparation
- Mobility. Whether families are stationary or in transit

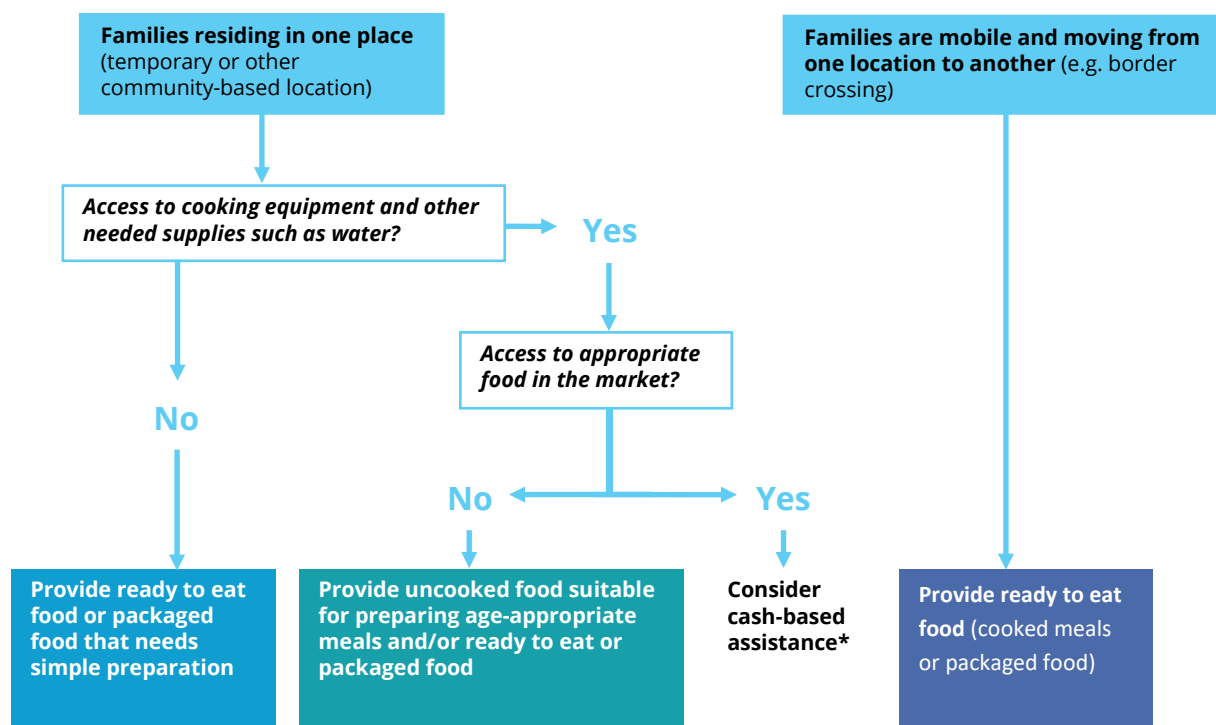


Children are more likely to have an age-appropriate nutritious diet when mothers and other caregivers are supported to access acceptable and nutritious food for themselves, given many of the same foods can be consumed by young children and the rest of the family.

Children 6-months to 2-years of age can consume family food when provided in the appropriate consistency.

### 2. Provide food assistance options/modalities

Consider the following modalities of food assistance depending on availability of cooking equipment, access to the market and mobility:



\*There are a number of factors to consider for cash-based assistance. Refer to the food security cluster for guidance.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE FOOD ASSISTANCE PACKAGE?

Regardless of the modality of assistance, ensure that the (food) assistance considers the needs of children 6-months to 2-years:

- Includes **nutrient-dense foods, such as fortified infant cereal, and a variety** of food if possible.

Aim at always including a fortified infant cereal and then at least ONE food item from each of the next THREE columns in table 1 (e.g. fortified infant cereals, with meat or alternatives, vegetables and fruits).

- Facilitates eating **small meals frequently**.
- Provides food that can be consumed in the **age-appropriate consistency**.

Family food could be modified to be suitable for consumption by children aged 6-months to 2-years.

Table 1. Foods that can be provided in the food assistance package

|  | Fortified infant cereals  | Meats or alternatives   | Vegetables   | Fruits   | Other Cereals (optional)  |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Access to cooking equipment and water but with difficulty accessing food in the market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ready-to-eat fortified cereals</li> <li>Fortified cereal for simple reconstitution</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat in can or jar</li> <li>Fish in can or jar</li> <li>Chicken in can or jar</li> <li>Pulses in can or jar</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegetables to cook</li> <li>Vegetable in jar</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruits that can be peeled</li> <li>Fruits that can be cooked</li> <li>Fruit in jar</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semolina</li> <li>Oats</li> <li>Buckwheat</li> <li>Rice</li> </ul> |
| No access to cooking equipment or other supplies to prepare food                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ready-to-eat fortified cereals</li> <li>Fortified cereal for simple reconstitution</li> <li>High energy biscuit</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat in jar</li> <li>Fish in tin or jar</li> <li>Chicken in jar</li> <li>Pulses in can or jar</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegetable in jar</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit in jar</li> <li>Fruits to peel</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soft bread</li> <li>Plain crackers</li> </ul>                      |

Ready-to-eat cooked meals should be safely prepared and served, contain a variety of nutrient-dense foods and be of age-appropriate consistency.



### DO NOT GIVE

- Foods and drinks of low nutrient value and/ or high in salt or sugar (such as packaged high salt soups; noodles; deep fried food; salty snack foods; biscuits or cakes; sweets; sweetened drinks; sweetened fruit puree; sweetened breakfast cereals).
- Foods in feeding bottles.
- Foods that may cause choking hazards such as whole nuts.
- Powder milk or Infant formula.\*
- Foods labelled for children less than 6-months of age.

\* Young children in need of infant formula should be referred to specialized services for young children (such as the Blue Dots).

Any assistance in the form of foods or products distributed as complementary foods in emergencies should be in accordance with global standards including the [Codex Alimentarius standards](#)<sup>3</sup> and the International [Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions](#).<sup>4</sup>

All forms of marketing of foods high in fats, sugar or salt should be avoided. In addition, there should be no promotion or any specific brand or product that is being provided (including via social media outlets). This is in accordance with [WHA 69.9 on ending inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children](#)<sup>5</sup> and the WHO set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children.<sup>6</sup>

## HOW MUCH TO INCLUDE IN THE FOOD ASSISTANCE PACKAGE?

Quantities of foods should be calculated based on energy and nutrient requirements.<sup>7</sup>

- For children 6-11 months, the estimated energy requirement from food is 325 Kcal per day (excluding energy requirement from breastmilk, infant formula, or other milks).
- For children 12-months to 2-years, the estimated energy requirement from food is 450 Kcal per day (excluding energy requirement from breastmilk, infant formula, or other milks).

### Example of a month's food assistance package suitable for feeding a child aged from 6-months to 2-years

| Child 6-11 months       | g/unit | units | Total g/month | Child 12-23 months   | g/unit | units | Total g/month |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|---------------|----------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Fortified cereal mix    | 250    | 8     | 2000          | Fortified cereal mix | 250    | 6     | 1500          |
| Meat in jar             | 100    | 4     | 400           | Meat in jar          | 100    | 8     | 800           |
| Cooked vegetables (jar) | 200    | 6     | 1200          | Cooked vegetable     | 200    | 3     | 600           |
| Fruits (jar)            | 200    | 6     | 1200          | Fruits               | 200    | 3     | 600           |

Annex 1 provides nutrient composition of examples of food assistance packages.

Further details on the content of the food assistance package can be provided by the [Ukraine Nutrition Cluster](#).

## 3. Provide support activities, services, and supplies

### a. Key messages to provide

- Information on the food provided: Who the food is for; What it is; What it contains; How to prepare (if unfamiliar or packaged food); How to store: packet/ container and left-over food; How to serve.
- Do not give complementary food to children below age 6-months.
- Continue breastfeeding your child as often as s/he wants, until age 2-years or older. Breastmilk remains an important source of nutrients and energy, for healthy growth and development.

3 <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/home/en/>

4 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240005990>

5 [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA69/A69\\_R9-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R9-en.pdf)

6 WHO. Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010.

7 Physiological requirements for children 6-23 month old (protein, fat, micronutrients) were referenced according to NutVal 4.0, that have been calculated using values from FAO/WHO/UNU (2004): Energy requirements of young children from birth to 11 months: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5686e/>

- To reduce risk of illness, wash hands before preparing and serving food for children and wash child’s hands before eating food.
- Children who feel stressed may not have a good appetite. Gently and patiently encourage your child to eat. Do not use force.
- To reduce stress and comfort for you and your child, try to spend some time interacting with them in a way that is calming and pleasurable to you both, e.g. playing, singing songs, quiet cuddle time.

The information should be provided in the language of the relevant population and simple non-technical language used.

**b. Additional supplies that may be needed**

- Potable water.
- As needed, provide age-appropriate feeding tools (spoons, bowls, cups, etc).
- Additional items may include hygiene items (e.g. toothbrush, toothpaste, etc) and teething gel.

Additionally, provide information on services available, eligibility and contact details including infant and young child feeding counselling, support for non-breastfed infants, distribution of hygiene items, psychosocial counselling, and others.

*The Blue Dots are a multi-agency point providing multiple services for the population who has fled Ukraine, they are located on the border of Ukraine in the different neighbouring countries. More information on services available on the borders can be found here: <https://help.unhcr.org/ukraine/>*

For further information contact [UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/).

## Annex 1 Energy and Nutrient Composition of Examples of Food Assistance Package

### Child 6-11 months

|                         |       | ENERGY     | PROTEIN   | FAT        | IRON       | ZINC       |
|-------------------------|-------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
|                         | g/day | kcal       | g         | g          | mg         | mg         |
| FORTIFIED CEREAL MIX    | 66    | 220        | 8.4       | 2.0        | 2.6        | 2.0        |
| MEAT IN JAR             | 40    | 36         | 0.4       | 0.1        | 0.1        | 0.1        |
| COOKED VEGETABLES (JAR) | 40    | 30         | 0.8       | 0.0        | 0.3        | 0.1        |
| FRUITS (JAR)            | 13    | 30         | 2.4       | 2.2        | 0.2        | 0.5        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            |       | <b>316</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>4.3</b> | <b>3.2</b> | <b>2.7</b> |

### Child 11-23 months

|                         |       | ENERGY     | PROTEIN      | FAT         | IRON        | ZINC        |
|-------------------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                         | g/day | kcal       | g            | g           | mg          | mg          |
| FORTIFIED CEREAL MIX    | 100   | 336        | 12.7         | 3.1         | 4           | 3.1         |
| MEAT IN JAR             | 20    | 18         | 0.2          | 0.1         | 0.1         | 0.0         |
| COOKED VEGETABLES (JAR) | 20    | 15         | 0.4          | 0.0         | 0.2         | 0.1         |
| FRUITS (JAR)            | 27    | 64         | 5.0          | 4.6         | 0.5         | 1.0         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            |       | <b>433</b> | <b>18.35</b> | <b>7.85</b> | <b>4.85</b> | <b>4.25</b> |