

Press Release - July 27, 2000

World Breastfeeding Week - Breastfeeding: It's Your Right

It has been the Indian tradition to breast-feed children. Even when the mother is not adequately healthy she would make it a duty to breast-feed the child.

Against this background, it may be sound redundant to try to popularize and promote breast-feeding in India. While it may still be the case in the rural areas, in the urban areas and among the middle classes, the practice is declining. The reasons are many. The most important is the impression, sometimes fostered by disinformation, that exclusive breast feeding of children for the first six months does not provide adequate nourishment for growing infants. There have been also some so-called studies claiming that children of working mothers cannot be sustained by mother's milk alone. It is not true. Therefore, the World Alliance for Breast-feeding Action, an international organisation, and its Indian affiliate, the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India, are engaged in spreading the truth about the practice and to promote it nationwide. A World Breastfeeding Week is observed every year from the first to the seventh of August. This year, the focus is on breastfeeding as a human right and women right to breastfeed which should be supported by providing the mother maternity benefits even in the unorganized sector. New research has established that infants and their mothers achieve and enjoy optimal health when the mothers practise breastfeeding exclusively for about six months and continue doing so, while providing adequate supplementary diets, until the infants are of two years of age.

Breastfeeding also provides unique protection against many diseases, including those of the gastro-intestinal tract, particularly diarrhoea which is widespread among Indian children, respiratory tract infections including pneumonia, ear infections and urinary tract malfunctioning. It also has a built-in contraceptive aspect so that spacing of childbirths is automatically achieved.

In addition to provide informations & support to women to breastfeeding stringent implementation of the IMS Act should be done & suitable necessary amendments be approved immediately.

The enclosed brochure gives more particulars of the benefits of breastfeeding and explains how it is a human right of both child and mother.

Dr. Arun Gupta

National Coordinator, BPNI

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is a national network of individuals and organisations working for protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in India. BPNI believes that breastfeeding is the right of all mothers and children. BPNI works through advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education and training of health workers and monitoring the compliance of International Code/The Indian Law to protect breastfeeding. BPNI works as the Regional Focal Point for South Asia for the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) & International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies producing breastmilk substitutes, related equipment and complementary foods or those have been ever found to violate the IMS Act or International Code.