

World Breastfeeding Week 1-7 AUGUST 2008

MOTHER SUPPORT: GOING FOR THE GOLD



OBJECTIVES of WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 2008

- ❖ To expand awareness of the need for and the value of providing support to a breastfeeding mother.
- ❖ To disseminate updated information about support for breastfeeding mothers.
- ❖ To launch public action and demand for the provision of mother support.



BPNI 2008

Mother Support: "Any support provided to mothers for the purpose of improving breastfeeding practices..."

– WABA Global Initiative for Mother Support (GIMS) 2007

MOTHER SUPPORT: GOING FOR THE GOLD

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action defines mother support as **'any support provided to mothers for the purpose of improving breastfeeding practices for both mother and infant and young child' (WABA 2007).**

This is the Year of Olympics. Like an athlete, a breastfeeding woman also needs support from many quarters. In the WBW2008, those who support breastfeeding women will be winning medals, and a GOLD medal will go to the best effort in supporting women.

Both the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* and National Guidelines on infant and young child feeding recognize that all infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months followed by introduction of appropriate complementary feeding along with continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond. These feeding norms can only be achieved with adequate support to mothers. The maternal health and nutritional status is of paramount importance for providing critical care to their infants and young children. Mother plays a pivotal role in the implementation of these practices and for that she needs support from all quarters.

In India, more than 1.4 million infants die each year, mostly due to diarrhea, pneumonia and newborn infections. Supporting breastfeeding women will make a difference to these figures.

Most recent scientific evidence (*Pediatrics, 2006; 117; 380-386*) has shown for the first time that by starting to breastfeed within one hour after birth would prevent 22% neonatal deaths

occurring after day 1 because it cuts down the infection risk by many times. According to the new evidence from Lancet 2008 series on maternal and child under-nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is shown to be the best intervention for preventing malnutrition. Predominant breastfeeding (breastmilk plus plain water) increases the risk of infant death 1.48 times and partial breastfeeding (breastmilk plus other milks) increases this risk by 2.85 times as compared to exclusive breastfeeding.

Why women should be supported

Because aggressive marketing of baby milk and food companies can easily mislead women who don't have access to accurate information. It also caused lack of confidence among women to be able to meet the nutritional demands of their babies. The feeling of 'not enough milk' forces most mothers to resort to other milks or foods during the period of exclusive breastfeeding. The remedy lies in building their confidence, which is a skillful act.

Economic necessity is another important reason that often derails a mother's decision, as she is forced to take up a job with inadequate maternity protection.

Infants are meant to be breastfed. Breastfeeding provides the best possible start to life in all areas of development. Artificial feeding is associated with a higher rate of deaths in babies. Early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding can save more than one million babies. Compared with children who are exclusively breastfed, those who are artificially fed do not develop normally – they have poorer health, higher mortality rates and lower IQ scores.

Mothers and communities also benefit when babies are breastfed. Breast cancer is more common in mothers who either haven't breastfed or breastfed for a short time. Menstrual periods return earlier for mothers who don't breastfeed, and this can lead to closer pregnancies, and increased health problems in mothers and babies. Exclusive breastfeeding leads to decreased economic costs for families, communities, the health system, and the environment.

Women Need Support for:

Women themselves should be healthy and well nourished, to be successful in breastfeeding. They need support during pregnancy, at birth, and during lactation, whether they work inside homes or outside.

A kind and skilled health worker must support women at the time of birth to succeed beginning breastfeeding within an hour of birth and prolonged skin-to-skin contact.

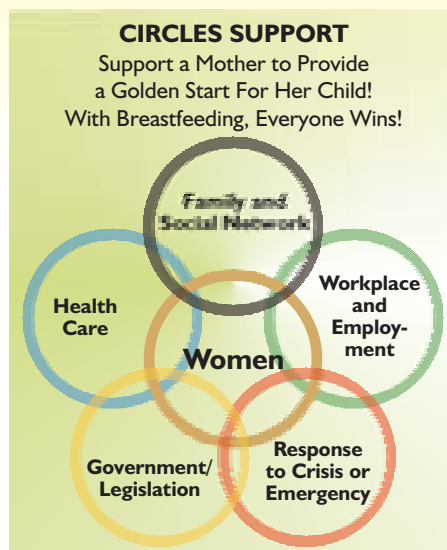
- Further they should have access to Counseling (one to one or group) and support to continue exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months.
- They need Answers to their questions, Solution to their problems like sore nipples, mastitis, engorgement (a substantial number of about 13% women)
- Women need counseling for adequate complementary feeding and continued breastfeeding at completion of 6 months and
- Finally if women are HIV positive, they need counseling for infant feeding options.

LACK OF BREASTFEEDING AFFECTS THE CHILD, THE MOTHER, THE COMMUNITY, AND THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

Babies and children who do not breastfeed have increased risk of:	Mothers who do not breastfeed are more likely to experience:	Communities and health systems suffer the effects of a lack of breastfeeding:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mortality * Respiratory infection * Diarrhoea and other infections * Obesity * Diabetes * Asthma and wheeze * Childhood cancers * Lower IQ * Abnormal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Breast and ovarian cancer * Type II Diabetes * Early return of menstrual periods and fertility * Less time between pregnancies * Difficulties in cleaning and preparing formula and bottles * Financial burden of artificial baby milk and fuel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased costs of treating infections, obesity, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses * Increased costs of time off work by mothers of sick children * Negative environmental impact of landfill for disposal of cans and packaging * Multiple costs of breastmilk substitutes

FIVE Circles of Mother Support

- **Family and Social Network:** Family and friends compose the mother's immediate and continuous support network, which reduces stress and empowers the mother. Social support increases the mother's confidence in her ability to breastfeed.
- **Health Care Facilities and Systems:** Family health workers, trained in counseling skills can provide support ranging from mother friendly prenatal care and support from the time of birth, to postpartum. Postnatal care should be there to facilitate bonding of the mother and the child like skin-to-skin contact for a few hours, early initiation of breastfeeding within an hour, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding along with adequate and appropriate complementary feeding after six months to 2 years or beyond.
- **Workplace and Employment:** Employed women face challenges and need support to succeed both at work and at breastfeeding. The opportunities for mother support are as varied.



Working women in different places need different kind of support. Facilitating mother-baby contact or expression and storage of breastmilk, support to women in unorganised sector through substituting work by the community providing on-site creche and baby care facilities are few example. Babies must stay close to the mothers for success of

exclusive breastfeeding.

- **Government/Legislation:** Support of international documents, protections for optimal breastfeeding, plus active and well-funded national mechanisms /committees /commissions along with legislation that combats aggressive marketing of substitutes and baby foods for infants and young children is required. Governments should enact sufficient paid maternity leave or cash benefits that benefit breastfeeding women.
- **Response to Crisis or Emergency:** A woman requires special planning and support in an unexpected and/or serious situations, with little control like natural disasters, refugee camps, divorce proceedings, critical illness of mother or baby, or living in an area of high HIV/AIDS prevalence with no support for breastfeeding.
- **Women in the Center Circle:** Women are in the center because the presence or absence of support impacts them directly. Women also have an important role in securing support and in providing it to others.

Actions For Support

CIRCLE – WOMEN IN THE CENTRE

- ♦ Learn about breastfeeding.
- ♦ Ask for support and offer support to others.
- ♦ Take care of health and nutritional needs during pregnancy and lactation.
- ♦ Talk to women who have had positive breastfeeding experiences.
- ♦ Attend a mother-to-mother support group or other similar support entity.

CIRCLE – FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORK

- ♦ Provide practical support to the breastfeeding mother: prepare a meal, help care for older children, or help with chores.
- ♦ Learn about breastfeeding to help a mother prevent or recognise and address difficulties early.
- ♦ Believe in mother's ability to breastfeed her baby.
- ♦ Provide transportation for her to attend a support group meeting or visit a lactation consultant.
- ♦ Write letters to the media to advocate for breastfeeding and to correct misinformation.

CIRCLE – HEALTH CARE

- ♦ Learn how to start a maternity facility-based mother support group.
- ♦ Take a peer counsellor or other breastfeeding training course.
- ♦ Actively solicit medical and political leadership to support BFHI in every facility.
- ♦ Identify the lactation experts in your community and how best to contact them.

- ♦ Include breastfeeding counselling and support skills in all health worker trainings.

CIRCLE – GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATION

- ♦ Speak or write to policy makers about the importance of supporting breastfeeding.
- ♦ Advocate for legislation that enacts the provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions / IMS Act.
- ♦ Join the local breastfeeding coalition and actively support its activities.
- ♦ Send information about BFHI to hospital and maternity facility administrators.
- ♦ Circulate a petition to provide local tax incentives to worksites that support mothers to breastfeed.

CIRCLE – WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYMENT

- ♦ As an employer, maintain a suitable location for breastfeeding women to express their milk and/or breastfeed their baby.
- ♦ Work with local community organisations to support breastfeeding in the informal work sector.
- ♦ As the caregiver of a breastfed baby, learn what is needed to maintain a breastfeeding experience.
- ♦ As a family member, ease the household tasks of the breastfeeding and working mother.
- ♦ Write to legislators to support the enactment of paid maternity leave, extension of maternity leave, and laws supporting mother friendly workplaces.

Five Gold Rules to Support Breastfeeding

- ❖ Address each mother and baby situation as individual and unique; be sensitive to the needs of a breastfeeding mother.
- ❖ Listen empathetically to learn a mother's concern; refrain from talking except to ask questions for clarity; provide just enough information for her to make her own choices.
- ❖ Ensure that fathers and families are well informed so that they can support each woman in breastfeeding.
- ❖ Hold governments, workplaces, and society responsible to create an environment in which every woman is fully enabled to have the choice to breastfeed and to act on her decision.
- ❖ Believe that a mother can successfully breastfeed and tell her that; on the other hand, recognise when a mother needs more help than you can offer.

Action Ideas

- 👉 Call upon your area representative/ Political party functionary/District Magistrate or any other influential person to build "Support to Women" in policy and programmes.
- 👉 Prepare a petition for gathering support to women and get it signed by as many people as possible. [Http://bpni.org/wbw.html](http://bpni.org/wbw.html)
- 👉 Take out a 'public rally' to demand support of women.
- 👉 Submit your petition to political personalities, executive heads and send copies to chief ministers of your state, prime minister of India and heads of political parties during the World Breastfeeding Week 2008.

Acknowledgments

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What is BPNI

BPNI is a registered, independent, non-profit, national organisation that works towards protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants and young children. BPNI works through advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education, research, training and monitoring the company compliance with the IMS Act. BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies producing infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles, related equipments, or infant foods (cereal foods).



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