

## Feeding babies aged 0-6 months

### FACT

#### Breast milk is the only food a baby needs during the first six months

- It makes the baby grow strong and healthy.
- Breast milk gives babies all the food and water they need during the first six months of life.
- A baby's stomach cannot digest any foods except breast milk and infant formula.
- Exclusive breastfeeding until the baby is six months old protects the baby against sicknesses (e.g. diarrhoea). Exclusive breastfeeding means giving the baby breast milk only and nothing else.

When doing exclusive breastfeeding, women are less likely to become pregnant.

### ACT

#### Feed your baby only breast milk during the first 6 months

- ❖ Put the baby to your breast immediately after birth. A new born baby can suckle strongly.
- ❖ Give the first milk (colostrum) to your baby. It protects him/her from many diseases.
- ❖ Your breast milk has all the food and water your baby needs. Do not give any other water or foods in the first 6 months, it could make your baby sick (e.g. with diarrhoea).
- ❖ Breastfeed when the baby wants to feed, at least 8-10 times during the day and night.
- ❖ Regular breastfeeding will help your body to produce enough milk and keep your breasts from becoming swollen and painful.

#### ! Important for HIV-positive mothers:

- ❖ There is a small chance that an HIV-positive mother may pass HIV to her baby through breast milk. For that reason sometimes replacement feeding (infant formula) is recommended. However, if replacement feeding cannot be carried out in a safe way (see further below) it can harm your baby and cause illness or death. Most of the time exclusive breastfeeding is the safest and healthiest way to feed your baby for the first 6 months.

- ❖ Never practice mixed feeding (which means combining breastfeeding with infant formula or other foods).
  - ❖ Discuss with your health care centre which feeding method is suitable for your baby.
  - ❖ **If you decide to breastfeed your baby:**
    - Start breastfeeding immediately after birth and do not give any other food or drink.
    - Immediately go to the clinic if you have cracked nipples or swollen breasts, or if your baby has sores or thrush in the mouth.
    - After six months stop breastfeeding quickly (e.g. over 2 days to 3 weeks maximum).
  - ❖ **If you decide to give your baby infant formula (replacement feeding) you need to have:**
    - enough money to buy infant formula
    - clean water and good sanitation
    - a clean home and a cool, safe place to store the milk (a fridge or clean closed cupboard)
    - enough cooking fuel to prepare the infant formula
    - the means? to prepare your baby's food both day and night
    - access to healthcare facilities
    - good family support.
- Do not breastfeed your baby once you have started giving infant formula.

## OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

**TAKE NOTE!** Skin-to-skin contact between you and the baby is good for you and your baby in many ways. It also helps you to breastfeed your baby successfully.

- Have skin-to-skin contact with your baby right after birth. You and your child should not be separated after birth.
- Let the baby sleep close to you. That also makes it easier to feed him/her.

**WATCH** over your baby's weight and health through regular visits to the health care centre.

**TAKE NOTE!** When breastfeeding, you need more food than usual because you have to feed two – yourself and your baby. Eat a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of foods that give you energy and help to protect you and your baby's health (see Fact Sheet 8).

**REMEMBER!** Wash your hands after changing the baby's nappies. This avoids spreading germs that can cause illness.