

## Feeding young children aged over 6 months

### FACT

#### A baby over 6 months needs breast milk and other foods

Up to six months a baby should have ONLY breast milk.

After 6 months breast milk is not enough for a baby to grow well. It needs other foods.

But it is important for a child's growth and health to continue breastfeeding until he/she is *at least 2 years old (unless the mother is HIV positive, see below)*.

#### Young children need frequent meals

Young children have small stomachs and can only eat small portions at a time. To get enough food to grow well, they need meals frequently.

Young children should have 2-4 meals a day plus 1-2 healthy snacks in between.

**Some healthy snacks for young children are:** fruits, vegetables, boiled eggs, sour milk, bread, sweet potatoes.

### ACT

#### To give your child a healthy diet from 6 months to 2 years:

- ❖ Continue breastfeeding.
- ❖ Feed a variety of foods.
- ❖ Make staple foods, like porridge, rice, mashed potatoes, the main component of the diet.
- ❖ Feed your child plenty of fresh vegetables (including green leafy vegetables) and fruits. These foods keep your child healthy and protect him/her against illness. Green leafy vegetables and orange/yellow vegetables are especially healthy because they contain vitamin A (see Fact Sheet 6).
- ❖ Feed your child animal foods (e.g. milk, eggs, meat, offal, poultry, fish) **or** legumes (beans, lentils, peas) every day. These foods help your child to grow well.
- ❖ Include a little fat or oil in meals to add energy and to absorb vitamins.
- ❖ You can also add mashed groundnuts and other mashed nuts and seeds to your child's meal. It will add more energy and help the child to grow well.
- ❖ Give your baby clean water whenever he/she is thirsty.

#### Give more foods as the baby grows

The amount of foods and the number of meals gradually increase with your child's age.

### **Age 6-7 months**

Type of food: Start giving semisolid foods (e.g. plain or fermented porridge, mashed potato).

Gradually add legumes and oilseed flours, mashed vegetables and fruits, a little oil and, when possible, animal foods (e.g. milk, minced meat, eggs, fish flesh).

Continue breastfeeding.

How often: Start with 1-2 teaspoons of semisolid foods twice a day. Gradually increase the amount and raise the frequency to 2-3 meals per day.

### **Age 8-11 months**

Type of food: Start giving small foods which your baby can hold him/herself (e.g. bread, banana).

Continue breastfeeding.

How often: 3 times a day plus 1 healthy snack.

### **Age 1-3 years**

Type of food: Share family meals with your child.

Give the child his/her own bowl or plate to make sure that he/she gets enough food, especially animal foods (meat, fish, eggs) or legumes, and vegetables and fruits.

Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years.

How often: 3-4 times a day plus 1 or 2 healthy snacks.

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

After 6 months stop breastfeeding quickly (e.g. over 2 days to 3 weeks maximum) and introduce other foods as mentioned above.

Do not combine breastfeeding with other foods (mixed feeding).

## **OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS**

**REMEMBER!** Wash your hands before preparing your child's food and before feeding your child. Only use clean utensils.

**MAKE SURE** the meals do not contain bones or hard pieces that might make the child choke.

**BE CAREFUL!** Do not make meals too spicy or salty. Too much salt is bad for children.

**ENCOURAGE** young children to eat in a loving way.

**CHECK** your baby's weight gain and health. Visit the health care centre regularly.