

MIDWIVES

have a powerful influence on a woman's decision to breastfeed and on the success of her breastfeeding experience. Quality midwifery care improves maternal and infant survival, health and well-being throughout the antenatal, birth and postnatal periods.

BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding matters because it is a low-cost way of providing the best nutrition for the baby. It protects the baby against common illnesses both in the short and long-term. It reduces the risk of cancer and other conditions in the mother. The cost of not breastfeeding is huge for families and nations. Breastfeeding is also a climate-smart decision and key to the Sustainable Development Goals.

WHO and UNICEF recommend:

- ▶ Early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth.
- ▶ Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life.
- ▶ Continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond, with the introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at 6 months.



WARM CHAIN OF SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING: The Warm Chain places the mother-baby dyad at the core and follows the first 1,000 days timeline. It strives to link different actors by coordinating efforts at all levels to provide a continuum of care. Each actor or link in the Warm Chain may already be part of an existing initiative such as the BFHI or a community health programme. With consistent messages and proper referral systems throughout the warm chain, the mother-baby dyad will benefit from ongoing support and breastfeeding counselling. All mothers are then empowered with a more satisfying and effective breastfeeding experience. A warm chain of support will help build an enabling environment for breastfeeding and protect against industry influence.

As a **MIDWIFE**, you can support breastfeeding in many ways

1. Discuss breastfeeding with youth in reproductive health education.
2. Inform mothers and families antenatally about the benefits and management of exclusive and continued breastfeeding, and about what happens at the time of birth and soon after.
3. Enable mother to achieve her ideal birthing experience:
 - ▶ Encourage a partner and/or birth companion to support her birth.
 - ▶ Adopt a preferred position during labour and delivery.
 - ▶ Avoid unnecessary separation and medical procedures.
4. Support the “golden hour”:
 - ▶ Ensure skin-to-skin contact immediately after delivery.
 - ▶ Allow uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact for the first hour or until the baby breastfeeds.
5. Provide skilled counselling for breastfeeding mothers in the first few days and through the postpartum period.
6. Empower mothers with strategies to enable them to combine breastfeeding and work.
7. Work together with others to ensure a continuum of care for the breastfeeding dyad.
8. Do not accept any gifts, samples, sponsorship or displays of infant formula, bottles or teats from companies.
9. How else can YOU protect, promote and support breastfeeding?



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)



This card was developed in collaboration with International Confederation of Midwives.

