

## Summary of PAHO/WHO Guiding Principles for Complementary Feeding of the Breastfed Child

### Duration of exclusive breastfeeding and age of introduction of complementary foods:

- Breastfeed exclusively from birth to 6 months of age
- Introduce complementary foods at 6 months of age with continued breastfeeding; help older children when they feed themselves, responding to their hunger and satiety cues

### Maintenance of breastfeeding:

- Continued frequent, on-demand breastfeeding until 2 years of age or beyond

### Responsive feeding:

- Directly feed infants and assist older children when they feed themselves, being sensitive to their hunger and satiety cues
- Slowly and patiently feed and encourage, but not force, children to eat
- If children refuse many foods, experiment with different food combinations, tastes, textures, and methods of encouragement
- Minimize distractions during meals if children lose interest easily
- Talk to children during feeding, with eye-to-eye contact

### Safe preparation and storage of complementary foods:

- Wash caregivers' and children's hands before food preparation and eating
- Store foods safely and serve foods immediately after preparation
- Use clean utensils to prepare and serve food
- Use clean cups and bowls when feeding children
- Avoid the use of feeding bottles, which are difficult to keep clean

### Amount of complementary food needed:

- Start at 6 months of age with small amounts of food and increase the quantity as the child gets older, while maintaining frequent breastfeeding
- For infant with average breast milk intake, feed complementary foods that provide infants with approximately 200 kcal/day at 6–8 months, 300 kcal/day at 9–11 months, and 550 kcal/day at 12–23 months in developing countries and 130 kcal/day at 6–8 months, 310 kcal/day at 9–11 months, and 580 kcal/day at 12–23 months in industrialized countries

**Food consistency:**

- Gradually increase food consistency and variety as the infant gets older, adapting to the infant's requirements and abilities

**Meal frequency and energy density:**

- Increase the number of times the child is fed complementary foods as the child gets older
- Provide complementary foods 2 to 3 times per day at 6–8 months of age and 3 to 4 times per day at 9–11 and 12–24 months of age, with additional nutritious snacks once or twice a day

**Nutrient content of complementary foods:**

- Feed a variety of foods to ensure that nutrient needs are met, including animal-source protein as often as possible, fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin A daily, and adequate fat
- Avoid drinks with low nutrient value and limit the amount of juice offered to avoid displacing more nutrient-rich foods

**Use of vitamin-mineral supplements or fortified products for infant and mother:**

- Use fortified foods or vitamin-mineral supplements as needed

**Feeding during and after illness:**

- Increase fluid intake during illness, including more frequent breastfeeding
- Encourage the child to eat soft, varied, appetizing, favorite foods
- After illness, give food more often than usual and encourage the child to eat more

*Source:* Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO). 2003. *Guiding Principles for Complementary Feeding of the Breastfed Child*. Washington, DC: PAHO.