



Infant and Young Child Feeding in Lebanon A JOINT STATEMENT - December 2019

Amidst the economic crisis that Lebanon is going through and the various initiatives for help amongst community members, the Ministry of Public Health and partners and based on the **Infant and Young Child Feeding Policy**, remind of:

- ✓ The importance of promoting and supporting breastfeeding and protecting the right of children to be breastfed and of mothers to breastfeed to ensure appropriate care for infants and young children.
- ✓ The **importance of abiding by Law 47/2008** and the protection against unethical marketing of products that replace breastfeeding.

Rationale

Protecting and supporting exclusive breastfeeding in normal situations and particularly in economic crises is key, as breastfeeding provides a protective measure against the increased risks of illness among infants, ensures safe and available nutrition for the baby and provides a comforting environment for both the mother and baby.

Recommendations

Exclusive breastfeeding of infants during the first six months, with no introduction of other food or drinks even water, is the ideal natural nutrition, as it meets the nutritional requirements of the infant and provides valuable protection from disease and infection. After 6 months, the infants' requirements increase beyond what is provided by breast milk alone, and therefore infants should receive complementary foods in addition to breast milk up to two years and beyond.

What you can do to support and protect breastfeeding?

1. **Support exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years or beyond**
 - ✓ Prioritize access to food and safe water to mothers with infants less than 2 years of age
 - ✓ Encourage and support mothers to continue breastfeeding. Mothers may be stressed; therefore, it is important to provide assurance and safe havens for them to exclusively breastfeeding.
 - ✓ Identify and refer mothers and babies who need more support with breastfeeding to a lactation consultant¹.
2. **Support complementary feeding** and ensure that it is age appropriate, nutritionally adequate, and safely prepared.
3. **Protect breastfeeding and abide by Law 47/2008** based on the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes including:
 - ✗ **Never** include **infant formula or any other milk products** including powdered or Ultra High Temperature milk in the **general distribution of food or food baskets**.
 - ✗ **Never** accept unsolicited **donations** of any milk products or distribute donations to the general population.

What can you do to help families with infants less than one year who are not breastfed?

- ✓ Refer to a health care center or to a lactation consultant.
- ✓ Support the family with food and other needed items or refer to existing support programs.

Breast-milk substitutes or infant formula should only be provided discretely to infants who need it and in accordance with Law 47/2008.

- ✓ Infant formula should only be sourced and provided when:
 - The need has been confirmed by a health professional i.e. the mother and baby have been assessed
 - There is access to adequate clean water and resources are available to continuously provide appropriate infant formula with safe preparation, with family support and access to health services,
 - The infant formula is purchased and in line with Law 47/2008 including being **unbranded**.

For more information please contact the Ministry of Public Health, Infant and Young Child Nutrition Program, Beirut - **Hotline: 1214**

¹ Refer to list of lactation specialists