



The First 1000 Days

BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding is natural and human milk is what our babies need at a time when they are the most vulnerable – from birth to 24 months of life. Breast milk is rich in antibodies and has the right blend of nutrition needed to help our babies become healthy and smart!

Almost all women can breastfeed and can produce enough milk to breastfeed their babies optimally. This is true even in the case of twins. The beauty of breast milk is that the more a mother breastfeeds, the more milk is produced. To help ensure that all mothers in Bihar are supported to breastfeed their babies optimally, remember the mantra 1-6-24 - it is very important!

Mantra 1:

All babies, whether born in a health facility or at home, must be placed skin to skin with their mothers immediately after birth and supported to receive breast milk (and nothing else – no water, no sugar water, no ghutti, no honey, no infant formula) within the first hour of birth. The special milk produced by mothers at this time is called colostrum and is the perfect first food for the baby. Colostrum is yellowish in colour, thick, rich in antibodies– it is often called the first vaccine. It is extremely easy to digest and helps the baby pass his/her early stools thus helping to prevent jaundice.

A new-born's stomach is very small and can only take in 5-7 ml (1-2 teaspoons) of breast milk each feed, during the first few days after birth. A new-born's stomach is also very sensitive and is designed by nature to digest only breast milk. Giving the baby other products (e.g. formula, honey, water, etc.) fills his/her tiny stomach preventing him/her from getting the full benefit of colostrum. In addition, it can cause diarrhea and put him/her at risk.

During these initial days mothers need to be supported to keep their babies skin to skin and breastfeed frequently.

Starting to breastfeed early and exclusively helps the mother's uterus to contract and reduces the chances of post-partum bleeding. In addition, the sooner a mother starts to breastfeed the sooner breast milk is produced and the lower the chances of breast engorgement.

Mantra 6:

All children, whether rich or poor, must receive only breast milk (and nothing else, no cow's milk, no biscuits, not even water) for up to 6 months (180 days) of life.

After the first week of life a mother begins to produce mature milk which is thinner than colostrum and whiter. This mature milk has all the nutrients a baby needs to help complete his/her physical and mental development in the best possible manner – it contains antibodies, nutrients, and active substances that the mother's body produces to meet the growing needs of her baby. It also contains enough water to quench a baby's thirst, hence even in hot summers a baby does not need water.

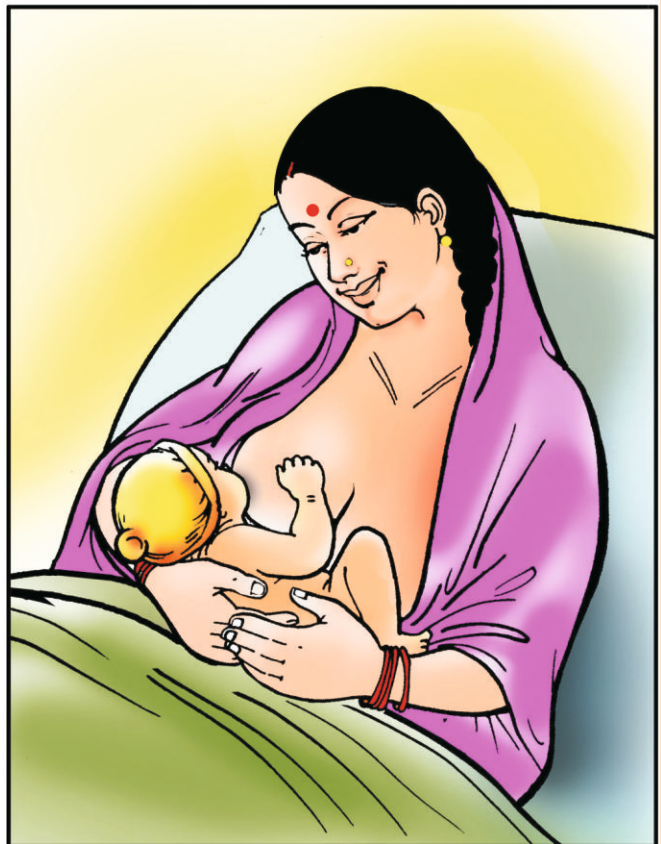
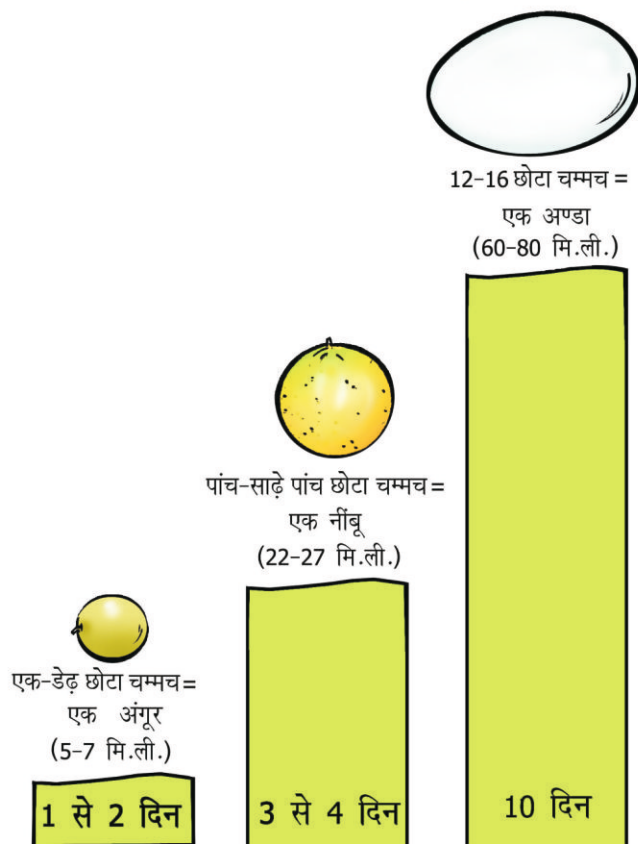
During this initial 6 months of life, a baby's digestive system is not fully developed and giving water, biscuits or cow's milk to infants at this stage (even in very small quantities), increases the risk of infection, and children are likely to fall sick.

Ensuring that breastfeeding is exclusive, and babies are fed on-demand both in the day and at night helps a mother ensure her supply of breast milk. It also helps delay the onset of menstruation and the chance of becoming pregnant again.

Mantra 24:

All children, whether rich or poor, must continue to receive breast milk up to 24 months along with appropriate complementary foods introduced at 6 months (180 days) of age. After 6 months of age, breast milk continues to provide a vital source of good nutrition and antibodies for the child. Breast milk is critical during this period to ensure appropriate development of the child's digestive system and brain, hence mothers need to continue to be supported to breastfeed their babies up to 24 months.

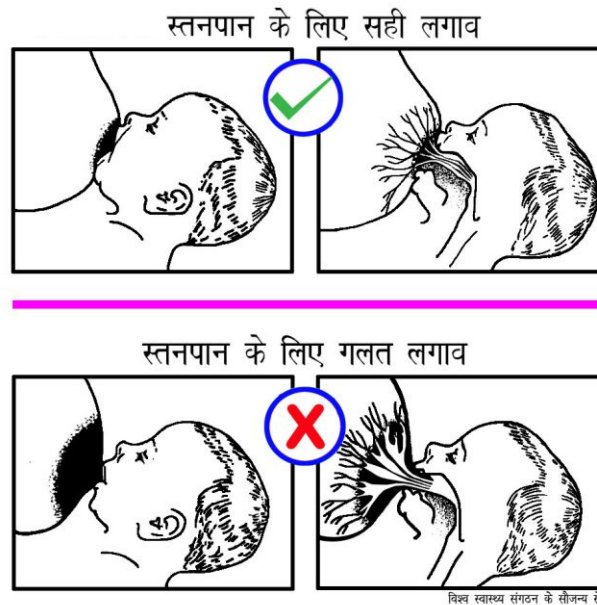
शिशु जितना दूध पियेगा, उतना अधिक दूध बनेगा।



हर खुराक में शिशु की जरूरत

When supporting mothers to breastfeed, remember the following:

- ✓ The appropriate position and attachment (as shown in the visual) – is very critical to ensure that the mother does not experience pain and that the child is able to receive breast milk easily.



- ✓ Empty one breast before switching to the next – whenever a mother breastfeeds, the initial milk that comes out is called fore milk – this is thinner and contains less fat and quenches the child's thirst, after the child feeds for some time, s/he gets hind milk – this is thicker and has a greater fat content. It is essential for the child to get both types of milk to grow well. If the child is switched to the other breast before emptying the first breast, the child's stomach will be filled with just the fore milk, s/he may not get hind milk, and will also feel hungry faster.
- ✓ The more a mother breastfeeds the more milk will be produced – many mothers say that they don't have enough milk, however, breast milk is produced by a hormonal response which is triggered each time the child breastfeeds, hence the more a mother breastfeeds, the more milk she will produce.
- ✓ To know if her baby is getting enough breast milk, a mother can monitor his/her wet nappies/diapers. During the first 2 days after birth, a baby will pass lightly colored urine 1 or 2 times a day. After the second day of birth, as more milk comes in, the baby will pass urine 6-8 times a day.
- ✓ If babies fall ill, breastfeeding should be continued as breast milk has antibodies and nutrients and helps babies recover faster. If a mother is ill and has common illness, she can and should continue to breastfeed. In case of a major illnesses (e.g. cancer, HIV/AIDS, etc.) and if the mother is undergoing treatment, she should seek the advice of a medical practitioner about continuing to breastfeed.

