Breastmilk
THE ONLY SOURCE OF WATER AND FOOD BABIES NEED FROM THE MOMENT OF BIRTH AND FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF LIFE

EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING, MEANING GIVING BABIES BREASTMILK ONLY, ON DEMAND (DAY AND NIGHT) NO WATER, OR OTHER LIQUIDS OR FOODS IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF LIFE, BRINGS HUGE BENEFITS TO BABIES, MOTHERS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS

In West and Central Africa
OUT OF EVERY 10 BREASTFED BABIES AGED UNDER SIX MONTHS, SEVEN RECEIVE LIQUIDS AND FOODS

WHY IS GIVING WATER THE NUMBER ONE OBSTACLE TO EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF LIFE?

Water fills up the baby’s small stomach leaving less room for breastmilk
Depriving the baby of necessary nutrients and calories can contribute to undernutrition, poor growth and stunting
Even a small amount of water can introduce disease-causing germs
Germs may be transmitted through contaminated water, feeding equipment and hands

Giving water reduces the mother’s milk supply because less time suckling the breast decreases the amount of milk produced
Belief that “I don’t have enough milk”
Mother fretting that milk is not enough
Less supply
Less demand for breastmilk

Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates in West and Central Africa
0%-25%
25%-50%
50% +

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25%-50%
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Breastmilk already contains all necessary water, there is no need for more in the first six months of life.

A MOTHER’S BREASTMILK IS PERFECTLY TAILORED FOR BABIES:

- Baby’s first vaccine
- Protects from diarrhoea and respiratory diseases
- Helps babies grow healthy, smart and strong
- Stimulates bond between mother and baby
- Contributes to healthy brain development and future intelligence scores

BREASTFEEDING IS ALSO GOOD FOR THE MOTHER’S HEALTH:

- Hastens her recovery after birth
- Helps with birth spacing by delaying the return of the menstrual cycle
- Reduces risk of ovarian and breast cancer
- Reduces risk of heart disease and diabetes
- Contributes to healthy brain development and future intelligence scores

EVERY $1 INVESTED IN SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING COULD GENERATE:

$35 IN ECONOMIC RETURNS

Breastfeeding is not a one-woman job. Mothers need support from their families, health care providers, employers, communities and governments so they can provide their children with the healthiest start to life.

Composition of Breastmilk:

- Water 88%
- Fat 4%
- Protein 1%
- Lactose 7%