

Breastfeeding: The 1st Hour Save **ONE**



1,000,000 million babies!

**WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
1-7 AUGUST 2007**

Initiation of breastfeeding within the 1st hour of birth is the first and most vital step towards reducing infant and under-five mortality, by reducing the overwhelmingly high neonatal mortality rate. Save **ONE million babies** - beginning with **ONE action, ONE-hour** support and **ONE** message:

begin breastfeeding within ONE hour of birth!

**India can save its 250,000 babies
annually by just ONE action**



“ It begins at birth. Our very first act after birth is to suck our mother’s...milk. This is an act of affection, of compassion. Without that act, we cannot survive. That’s clear...That’s the way of life. That’s reality. ”

Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness A Handbook for Living*, 1998

India - Breastfeeding: The 1st Hour-Save 250,000 babies!

Objectives

- To draw the world's attention as to how we can save ONE million babies with ONE action-To begin breastfeeding within ONE hour of birth.
- To encourage all communities to make this a key indicator of progress on child health, nutrition and development.

The Remarkable First Hour of Life

When healthy infants are placed skin-to-skin on their mother's abdomen and chest immediately after birth, they exhibit remarkable capabilities. They are alert. They can crawl, stimulated by mother's gentle touch, across her abdomen, reaching her breast. They begin to touch and massage the breast. This first gentle touch of a baby's hand or head at the breast stimulates release of maternal oxytocin, thus beginning both the flow of milk and enhancing the feelings of love for the baby. Then the baby smells, mouths and licks the mother's nipple. Finally, he or she attaches to the breast and feeds. This sequence of events is important for the survival of human young.

Although many authors describe these normal infant behaviours, we are just now discovering the importance of providing the opportunity for a mother and baby to have the experience. For the first time, researchers have assessed the effect of the timing of the first breastfeed on newborn mortality – showing that newborn mortality may be less if infants start to breastfeed in the first hour.

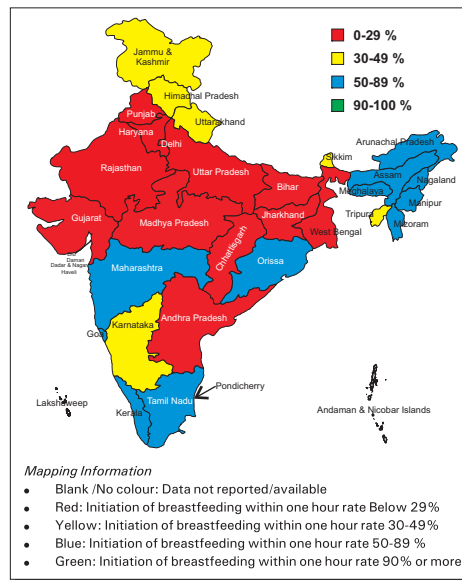
Early Initiation Reduces Neonatal Mortality: New Research from Ghana

A recent study from Ghana found that 22% of deaths among newborns were prevented if newborns started breastfeeding within ONE hour of birth, irrespective of whether they were exclusively breastfed later or not. Extrapolating the data to other countries, the same researchers estimated that if 99% of infants started breastfeeding on the first day of life, a total of 867,000 lives could be saved worldwide and if they started breastfeeding within ONE hour of birth, then 31% of all neonatal deaths could be prevented, which amounts to 1,117,000. **India can save its 250,000 babies annually by just ONE action i.e. If ALL mothers could begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth.** Initiation of breastfeeding within the 1st hour of birth is the first and most vital step towards reducing infant and under-five mortality, by reducing the overwhelmingly high neonatal mortality rate. This survival benefit has been demonstrated to be independent of exclusive breastfeeding, meaning that there is a need to estimate the total child survival benefit of beginning breastfeeding within ONE hour and continuing with exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months.¹

Where Does India Stand?

The recent release of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-III) data is an indication of the state of health in India. It reveals that 23.4% newborns across the country are given breastmilk in the first hour of birth. Although there is a marginal improvement of 7.4% in early initiation of breastfeeding in 7 years as compared to NFHS-II, this figure is still abysmally low. Northeastern states and Goa are some of the better performing states in India. The rate of in Mizoram is 65.4%, which is highest in the country followed by 59.7% in Goa and 58.6% in Meghalaya. The other states with relatively higher rates are Kerala (55.4%), Tamil Nadu (55.3%), Arunachal Pradesh (55%), Orissa (54.3%), Maharashtra (51.8%), Nagaland (51.5%) and Assam

(50.6%). In states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi it is less than 40%. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have lowest rates of only 7.2% and 4% respectively.



Action Ideas

Let us all take ONE action - help and support mothers to have skin-to-skin contact with their babies and to begin breastfeeding within **ONE** hour of birth.

- * Call upon each family member to support at least **ONE** mother to give up the practices of giving any other foods to baby before beginning breastfeeding.
- * Call upon all husbands to provide **ONE** hour in a day to support their wives during pregnancy at birth and later during first year.
- * Call upon all doctors and nurses to pledge at least **ONE** hour weekly to support **ONE** mother initiate breastfeeding timely.
- * Call upon family level health care providers to support at least **ONE** mother weekly.
- * Call upon media to give **ONE** hour/space in a month to propagate this message, all round the year.
- * Call upon spiritual leaders to include **ONE** message about breastfeeding in their discourses, "Women should begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth, it's loving wonderful moment and saves babies"
- * Call upon governments and international and national agencies to include it as **ONE** basic indicator of progress in newborn/child health and development.
- * Call upon all state governments to commit at least **ONE** Crore rupees each year towards action to support women at time of birth.

1. Edmond KM, Bard EC, Kirkwood BA. Meeting the child survival millennium development goal. How many lives can we save by increasing coverage of early initiation of breastfeeding? Poster presentation at the Child Survival Countdown Conference, London UK. December 2005



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