

## **Press Release - August 7, 2001**

### **Accurate information on Infant Feeding – Right of Mother and Child**

World Health Organisation (WHO) now recommends that Infants should be given exclusive breastfeeding[1] for first six months and safe and appropriate complementary foods should be given after six months of age with continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond.

Key departments of Government of India (Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of HRD and Department of Health, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare) and many other leading international and national professional bodies and NGOs including UNICEF, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI), International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), Association for Consumer Action on Safety and Health (ACASH) also endorse this recommendation.

On this basis, Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) has developed a set of core information on Exclusive Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding in a Question & Answer format. Today, on the 7th day of World Breastfeeding Week celebration many national health organisations including, Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI), Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI), Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), SURAKSHIT, YWCA-Delhi, Core Polio, Linkages-India, PLAN International, CARE India, endorsed the core information at a press conference held in Delhi.

#### **Breastfeeding benefits both Mothers and Children**

Optimum infant feeding practices are of fundamental importance for the survival, growth, development, health and nutrition of infants and young children. Exclusively breastfed babies have significantly less gastrointestinal and respiratory illness including ear infections and asthma, than those who are not breastfed. Breastfeeding provides infants and young children the ideal, indeed irreplaceable nutrition, which results in overall health improvement. The breastfeeding mothers have a reduced incidence of post-partum bleeding and thereby reducing chances of anemia, reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Families have other beneficial effects such as increased child spacing due to

delayed resumption of ovulation in the mother, and economic benefits by not spending on bottles, teats and infant formula.

Dr. Arun Gupta, a Senior Pediatrician and (agupta@bpni.org) National Coordinator, BPNI, and South Asia Representative of International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) said “both mothers and children have the right to breastfeed. Women have the right to access to accurate information which is critical for achieving success in feeding their infants appropriately”.

Referring to Convention on Rights of the Child, in the State of the World’s Children 1998 report, UNICEF says, “it is mandatory for States Parties to recognize children’s rights to the highest attainable standard of health and to take measures to implement this right”.

Studies from all over the country, most important one being the National Health Survey of India (NFHS-2, 1999) reveal that only half of the babies are appropriately fed (Ref. Infant Feeding Facts, BPNI website: [www.bpni.org](http://www.bpni.org)). According to Dr. Jagdish C Sobti, BPNI Task Force Coordinator, Education, says, “mothers even in educated or uneducated group, if motivated properly, could successfully breastfeed their babies. This is precisely where media can play a significant role for benefit of our populations”.

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 1-7 August celebrated each year and this year’s theme is Breastfeeding in the Information Age. Over the past one week thousands of people and groups from all over India carried out activities to mobilize action and information campaign on dissemination of “Core Information on Exclusive Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding” developed by BPNI.

### **Future Action**

1. BPNI invites all concerned organisations/citizens to endorse and disseminate accurate information on exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding throughout the year taking on from World Breastfeeding Week.

2. BPNI aims to carry out this message throughout the next year to reach as many as possible with translation of the information in 24 Indian languages to facilitate easy use locally. BPNI will make it available for all within one year.

3. BPNI seeks the support of media to inform as many people through their esteemed columns and reports. This will help dissemination of “accurate information” about infant feeding.

4. BPNI requests to media to eliminate misinformation about infant feeding. BPNI offers its full support and assistance in this venture.

5. BPNI also requests to all State/Central governments, UN agencies, donor agencies, other NGOs and others working on this issues to mobilise resources to ensure this right of women and children.

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The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is a registered, non-profit, independent national organization with international collaboration and works towards protecting, promoting, and supporting exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months, and appropriate complementary feeding thereafter alongwith frequent breastfeeding upto two years and beyond. BPNI is a network of individuals and organisations and is the Regional Focal Point for South Asia for the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) & Regional Coordinating Center of International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) for South Asia. BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies

producing infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles, related equipments, or infant foods (cereal foods).

[1] Exclusive breastfeeding means the infant receives only breastmilk (from his/her mother or a wet nurse or expressed breastmilk) and no other liquids or complementary foods not even water, with the exception of undiluted vitamin or mineral drops/syrups or medicines.