

National Policy on Infant Feeding Practices

Following the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) in Rome in December 1992, Member States endorsed that a National Plan of Action on Nutrition should be prepared by the end of 1994 in each Member country.

In this context, the Republic of Mauritius as part of its nutrition plan has prepared a Breast-feeding Policy to include.

POLICY

1. **Exclusive Breastfeeding**

All infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first 4-6 months of life. No water or other fluids or foods should be given to normal infants under 4-6 months.

2. **Initiation of breastfeeding**

All mothers should be helped to initiate breastfeeding within half an hour after delivery, assuming the infant and mother are healthy.

3. **No prelacteal feeds**

No prelacteal feeds (feeds given shortly after birth before the initiation of breastfeeding) should be given unless medically indicated.

4. **Rooming in**

All health institutions should allow normal newborns to stay with their mothers 24 hours a day.

5. Mothers should have access to babies in nurseries for breastfeeding

6. **Demand feeds**

Mothers to be encouraged to breastfeed on demand.

7. **Supplementary food**

No supplementary foods should be given to infants until the age 4-6 months either in hospital or at home.

Mothers to be taught how to prepare/feed soft food which are locally available.

8. **Expressing breastmilk**

All mothers should be taught to express breastmilk in order to maintain lactation and to feed using cup in case they are separated from their infants.

Babies who are unable to breastfeed due to complications should be fed expressed breastmilk in Hospital and at home.

9. **Sustained breast-feeding**

Breastfeeding should continue for at least 2 years.

10. **Education of mothers**

Health workers who care for pregnant women, mothers and young children shall advocate to mothers and their families the advantages and management of breastfeeding.

11. **No artificial teats**

No bottles, artificial teats or dummies should be used in the maternity care facility or pediatric unit. The use of these devices should be actively discouraged at all levels including Maternal & Child Health Clinics and feeding programs, by teaching of cup feeding when necessary.

12. **Education of Post- partum mothers**

Mothers should be informed and encouraged to exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first 4-6 months and no supplementary feeds of any kind should be given except if there is medical indication.

13. **Supplies**

No free or subsidized supplies of breastmilk substitutes should be provided to the maternity facilities.

Such supplies may not be offered to, nor accepted by health services or health workers at any level, whether private or Government.

Any such products must be obtained through the usual food procurement procedures.

14. Samples and Publicity

The distribution of free samples of breastmilk substitutes or any other infant foods to health workers at any level or to health institutions, be they private or government, should be discontinued. All health workers and health institutions should not accept such samples. No health institution may allow the display of posters or pictures originating from companies producing breast milk substitutes, regardless of the message, unless they have the approval of the Ministry of Health.

Visits of representatives of infant formula companies to health institutions are also prohibited.

15. The Ministry of Health hereby calls upon all manufacturers, distributors and suppliers of infant formula and breastmilk substitutes to respect and comply with these policies, by ceasing to offer free or low cost supplies of breastmilk substitutes to any health care facility that serves mothers and young children.

16. All health facilities shall review and implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes pending enactment of national law and/or regulations.

17. Reports on Violation

Health workers and others who note continuous disregard of this policy should report such violations to the Ministry of Health.