

# 7 Breastfeeding

---

## OVERVIEW



Breastfeeding can save the lives of babies in diarrhoea epidemics. It is always useful for mothers to continue breastfeeding in epidemics because breast milk is a clean, nutritious and cheap food for babies.

### Why breastfeed?

- ➔ Breast milk is the best food for babies in the first 6 months of their lives.
- ➔ Breast milk immediately after birth protects the baby from infections and should not be discarded.
- ➔ In diarrhoea epidemics, exclusive breastfeeding of babies less than 6 months of age can save their lives from killer diarrhoea and cholera.

### What you need to KNOW

- ➔ Know which community health workers and traditional birth attendants are doing health promotion on breastfeeding and work with them.
- ➔ Know the cultural beliefs and practices that are obstacles to exclusive breastfeeding.
- ➔ Know all the families in your area that have babies less than 6 months of age.
- ➔ Bottlefeeding can be dangerous if bottles and water used for preparing powdered milk are not very clean or are contaminated with germs. Always advise mothers to breastfeed.

### Use community message(s): 3

# 7 Breastfeeding

## What you can DO

- ➔ During health promotion and house-to-house visits, let mothers know that exclusive breastfeeding can protect their babies from diarrhoeal diseases and can therefore prevent death.
- ➔ Talk to community and religious leaders and to fathers about the importance of breastfeeding. Ask for their help in promoting it among mothers.
- ➔ Distribute posters and leaflets about breastfeeding.
- ➔ Repeat the same message: breastfeeding saves the lives of babies in diarrhoea epidemics. Keep sending this message to the community.
- ➔ After the epidemic is over, keep working on health promotion to encourage breastfeeding.



*The correct way to breastfeed*