

**Breastfeeding
within the
first hour of
life is vital to
the survival of
children**



Why

is breastfeeding within the first hour of life vital to the survival of children?

Newborns who start breastfeeding within their first hour of life are often born to mothers who:

- live in towns and cities;
- have more than ten years of education;
- deliver in a health facility;
- are assisted by health workers at child birth;
- belong to the richest 20 per cent of the population.

Breastfeeding within one hour of life protects the child

- Breastfeeding within one hour of life protects the child from infections and reduces the risk of death by up to 22 percent in the first month of life.
- Skin-to-skin contact with the mother through breastfeeding keeps the child warm and reduces the child's risk of dying of cold ('hypothermia') and fosters mother-infant bonding.

Breastfeeding within one hour of life for successful breastfeeding

- Every child should start breastfeeding within one hour of life to take advantage of the newborn's intense suckling reflex and alert state and to stimulate breastmilk production.
- Starting breastfeeding within one hour of life and learning to breastfeed properly (positioning and attachment) helps the mother produce more milk for her child.

Breastfeeding within one hour of life reduces the mother's risk of death

- Breastfeeding within one hour of life helps reduce excessive bleeding in mothers after birth and the risk of haemorrhage, a major cause of maternal death.

Where are we today?

Breastfeeding within first hour of life is recognized as one of the most important actions for infant survival, growth and development. Yet in India, only one infant in four starts breastfeeding within one hour of life.

Time of initiation of breastfeeding in newborns (%)



Source: NFHS-3, 2006

How to make breastfeeding in the first hour of life possible for all children?

Communicate goals, harmonize messages

- Raise awareness of the importance of starting breastfeeding within one hour of life in reducing newborn and infant deaths.
- Harmonize communication goals and messages across programmes at central, state and district levels for effective counselling and support to mothers and families.

Coordinate guidelines and programmes, scale up interventions

- Coordinate operational and technical guidelines by the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, and Women and Child Development to ensure support for the initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of life.
- Coordinate programme initiatives among different departments at the state and district levels to ensure convergent action to support mothers in initiating breastfeeding within one hour of delivery.
- Scale up community outreach strategies to ensure that all pregnant women are counselled and supported before and immediately after delivery by trained workers.