



**Solid foods and
mother's milk
after six months
of age help
infants grow
quickly and
strong**

Why

do infants need **both solid foods and mother's milk** after six months to grow quickly and strong?

After six months, infants need **both** breastmilk and complementary foods to continue to grow strong and develop fully

- Mother's milk alone cannot give infants older than six months all the nutrition needed during this period of fast growth and development.
- Complementary foods – the solid, semi-solid or soft foods, given with mother's milk after six months – ensure that infants grow and develop to their full potential.

Foods given to infants in the first six months of life do not improve growth and are dangerous

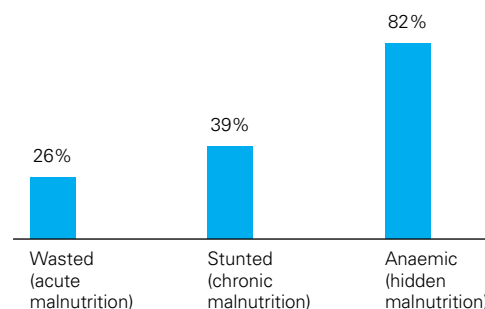
- Foods given to infants in the first six months of life replace mother's milk and result in frequent infections and poor growth and development.

Only slightly more than half of infants aged six to nine months receive some kind of complementary foods in addition to mother's milk.

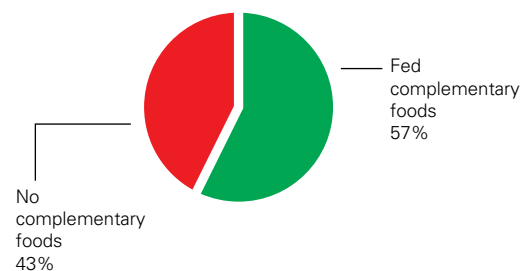
Where are we today?

In India, 26 per cent of children under two years of age are wasted (acute malnutrition), 39 per cent are stunted (chronic malnutrition) and 82 per cent are anaemic (hidden malnutrition), to a large extent because they were not fed age-appropriate complementary foods at the right time (i.e., after six months).

Nutritional status of children under two years of age (%)



Feeding practices of children between 6 and 24 months of age (%)



Source: NFHS-3, 2006

How to ensure that complementary foods are fed to all infants after six months of age?

Raise awareness, increase outreach

- Raise awareness among stakeholders – leaders, programme managers, health and community service providers, community members and media – on the importance of introducing good (age-appropriate) complementary foods after completing six months while breastfeeding continues.

Strengthen programmes, scale up interventions

- Strengthen programme initiatives that include improving the performance of frontline workers in primary care centres and communities in promoting and supporting the timely introduction of age-appropriate complementary foods and feeding practices; ensure adequate training, access to good quality communication materials and job aids, and timely and supportive supervision.
- Expand coverage and programme outreach through community-based plans comprising mapping of mothers with a child under two years of age, and providing timely and relevant counselling and support on how to improve the quality of complementary foods and feeding practices while breastfeeding continues.