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## Key nutrition issues

### Session 4 : Complementary feeding: foods to fill the nutrient gap

Day : 1

Time : 1 hour

#### Purpose

To review infant feeding practices for children from 6 months to 2 years of age, so that ASHAs can effectively counsel mothers for complementary feeding.

#### Objectives

At the end of the session ASHAs will be able to:

1. Explain when to introduce complementary foods, and what kind of foods to suggest to mothers
2. Explain how much food infants need at different points between 6 months and 2 years of age

#### Materials

- Flip chart papers or black board
- Markers or chalk
- IMCI Case Management Chart

#### Preparation

- Ensure participants carry their IMNCI Case Management Chart with them

#### Training methods :

##### Presentation and Discussion (40 min) Review of complementary feeding

#### Instruction for trainers:

1. Explain that breastfeeding alone is not sufficient for growing children after six months of age. After this age, babies need other types of foods for their growth, and this is referred to as complementary feeding. This goes along with breastfeeding which continues for two years, or more. If complementary foods are not introduced at this age, babies will not grow well, & will become undernourished and stunted.
2. Emphasize the following points:
  - All young children require complementary feeding after 6 months of age.
  - The 6-11 month period is an especially vulnerable time because infants are just learning to eat solids and are not able to take in sufficient foods. Malnutrition often happens at this time. Mothers or other care-givers must **actively feed the child at this age.**
  - By 6 months, an infant is able to swallow soft family foods, its teeth begin to come out, and it learns to start biting. It can now digest starchy foods.
  - By 9 months an infant can take small quantities of family foods and eat by itself.
  - By 15 months a child can fulfill all its requirements from family food.
3. Remind the trainees:

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- a. Affordability: Advise the mother to give only those food items as her family can afford to buy. Remember she will not be able to buy expensive foods.



- b. Quality of food: The mother should be advised to give variety of thick semi-solid foods along with green leafy vegetables and seasonal fruits normally consumed at home.
- c. Food hygiene: Practice the following:
- clean hands and nails with soap and water
  - clean utensils with soap and water
  - clean the food items
  - use clean water
  - clean the surface on which food is kept
  - Keep cooked food and water well covered
  - Consume food within two hours after cooking it
4. Explain that people have different kind of myths and beliefs about foods.  
For example – “What to eat or what not to eat after delivery” or that for a lactating mother and her child, some food is “hot” in nature & some food is “cold”. Do not condemn these thoughts straight away. Clear their myths later once the family has gained confidence in you.
5. Discuss the risks of introducing complementary foods too early or too late. Ask trainees what could happen in either case? Listen to their answers and fill in any missing information from the list below:
- Early introduction of complementary food –
- a. Increases the risk of diarrheal diseases. When an infant has diarrhea, it usually loses weight. An infant not growing properly is at greater risk of getting ill and becoming malnourished.
  - b. Replaces breastmilk with food that is usually less nutritious, leading to less weight gain, and the possibility of the child becoming malnourished.
- Risk of introducing complementary food late-
- c. Child does not receive all the nutrients it needs
  - d. Child’s growth and development slow down or stop
  - e. Risk of nutritional deficiencies and malnutrition increase
  - f. Risk of ill health increases

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**When child is 6 months old, start giving complementary food. Feed it with soup, dal, fruits and vegetables - they will make it healthy.**

## 6. Complementary feeding

Trainer to review the main points listed below:

### 6-9 months

- A child's first food should be soft food, which the it can swallow easily, like 'suji kheer, khichari, mashed vegetables, or fruits such as banana. The food should be thicker than breastmilk, and should be bland in taste and mashed or strained to homogenize it. Boiled & mashed potatoes, and seasonal fruits can also be given in a similar way.
- **Most mothers do not have extra time to cook separately and specifically for their children.** Home made dal, rice and vegetables can be given without *mirch* (or chillies) and spices. Mash it to make it soft. Add some milk, oil/ghee, and sugar/gur, which increase dietary energy levels.
- Make small pieces of bread or *roti*, soak them in milk. Keep for sometime, & then mash it so that this soft food can be consumed by the child easily.
- In place of milk, curry of vegetables or ghee/oil can also be used to make the bread (or *roti*) soft and then given to the child.
- Consistency of food needs to be changed gradually from liquid to semi-solid and then to solid as the child advances in age.
- Initially, a baby might spit out such food but this does not mean it does not like that food. The same food could be given some time later and effort made that child should consume it.
- To start with, give 1 or 2 teaspoon of food. Within 3-4 weeks increase it to ½ cup.
- Boiled & mashed egg can be given between 7-8 months. First give only the yellow of the egg, and then give the whole egg.
- As child starts sitting up, and its teeth begin to come out, the child wants to put everything in its mouth. During this period, bread, piece of *roti*, biscuit, or small pieces of carrot can be given. Encourage the child to eat by itself, provide help if really required.
- Keep in mind that baby has a small stomach and will eat only small amounts at a time so feed should be given 2-3 times.
- Continue breastfeeding and give semi-solids after breastfeeding.

### 9 – 12 months

- Quantity and frequency of above mentioned foods can be increased gradually and mashed non vegetarian food may also be given. At this age most babies need 3/4 *katori* (i.e., cup) of food 3-4 times a day. Continue with breastfeeding.

**Do not prepare special items for the child, give it what you normally eat.**

### 1 – 2 years

- Give almost every thing which is cooked at home. Gradually increase the quantity of food. Non-vegetarian families may add fish and minced meat to the diet. At this age, babies need 1 *katori* (cup) of food 5 times a day, 3meals and 2 snacks. Breastfeeding should continue.

- The following points should be kept in mind while preparing the food for the child:
  - Oil/ghee or sugar/gur should be added in food, to increase the dietary energy levels.
  - Green leafy vegetables are a must in diet, as they prevent anemia.



**A child of 1-2 years needs half the amount of food which its mother eats.**

**Adequate complementary feeding of infants along with continued breastfeeding reduces malnutrition in children.**

6. Review the main messages given below:

### **Key messages**

**(Give these key messages while talking to mothers or families)**

1. Breastfeeding till at least two years of age helps a child to grow strong and healthy
  2. Children who start complementary feeding at six months grow well.
  3. Family food with a thick, soft consistency, i.e., foods which stay easily on a spoon, nourish and fill the child's stomach.
  4. Animal foods are special foods for children.
  5. Legumes – peas, beans, lentils and nuts – are also good source of nutrients.
  6. Vitamin C rich foods help body to get its iron requirement
  7. Dark green leaves and orange and yellow coloured fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamin A, which helps the child to have healthy eyes and lesser infections.
  8. A growing child needs frequent meals and snacks. Give a variety of foods to the child.
  9. A growing child needs increasing amount of food.
7. Check for any questions and clarify doubts, if any.
8. Refer trainees to the IMCI Case Management Chart and review the pages on complementary feeding, and feeding during illness.

### **Summary (10 min)**

- Ask trainees to state when complementary foods should be introduced? (*6 months*)
- Ask how long breastfeeding should continue (*2 years*)
- What kinds of food should be offered at first?

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## Evaluation of the session

Objectives	Assessment Method
Explain when to introduce complementary foods, and what kind of foods to suggest to mothers	Questions and answers
Explain how much food infants need at different points between 6 months and 2 years of age	Questions and answers