Key communication messages on infant and young child feeding in emergency in Ukraine

as agreed by the Nutrition Sub-Cluster of the Health and Nutrition Cluster on October 7, 2015

Key messages

1. Breastfeeding has many benefits for the baby and mother. Breastfeeding is the strongest protection for your baby’s health and nutrition. Breast milk provides all the food and water your baby needs during the first 6 months and there is no substitute that can replace it. It is made to perfectly meet each individual baby’s nutrient, energy and water needs and to help protect against infection.

2. Put baby to the breast within one hour after birth. This “first milk” (colostrum, in Ukrainian “molozyvo”) is baby’s first “immunization” providing concentrated antibodies to build protection from illness. No infant formula or water should be given. Mother’s supply of breastmilk is sufficient.

3. Breast milk contains enough water for the baby’s needs. During the first 6 months baby does not need any other liquids, such as water, juice or tea — even during hot and cold weather — as this may cause baby to drink less breastmilk and to get sick.

4. Do not use bottles and teats as they decrease suckling and as a result mother produces less milk. They are difficult to clean and can cause your baby to become sick with diarrhea and other infections.

5. Stress does not make the milk dry up or inhibit milk production but may temporarily interfere with the milk flow. Frequent suckling by baby at the breast promotes milk flow and produces hormones that calm mother and baby. Babies can get fussy or upset for many reasons. If concerned, keep breastfeeding and seek medical assistance to identify the cause.

6. Breastfeed as often as baby demands milk allowing baby to feed until satisfied (rather than trying to establish “feeding schedule”). Babies can regulate the amount of breastmilk they need to meet their thirst and nutrient needs. The more baby suckles the more milk mother supplies.

7. Infant formula should only be used for medical reasons based on assessment by a health professional.

8. Breastfeeding allows normal growth until at least 6 months of age. At 6 months, introduce other foods in addition to breastmilk. Give a variety of nutritious foods, including meats, fruits and vegetables. Feeding non-breastmilk foods and liquids before 6 months can cause baby to get sick and reduce the intake of nutritious breastmilk. Starting foods too late can cause baby’s growth to falter.

9. Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years, or beyond. Breastmilk continues to provide older babies with nutrients important for their healthy growth and development.
Common misconceptions and facts

**Is my baby getting enough breast milk?**
A mother does produce enough breast milk for her baby.
Milk production works on a supply-and-demand basis: as long as the baby is put to the breast, is well attached and is allowed to suckle as often and as long as he/she demands, supply will meet all the baby’s needs.
If the baby is hungry and feeding frequently, is gaining weight, does not look visibly thin and is producing pale urine about 6 times a day they are getting enough milk. Exclusively breastfed babies grow at a slower rate than formula fed babies, but this is healthier for the baby.

**I’m not getting enough food / the type of food I am eating is not good so I am not producing milk**
... Mothers not eating a good diet can breastfeed. Even mild and moderate malnutrition in women will not decrease milk production. Feed the mother so that she can feed her infant. All mothers need extra fluids and food to maintain their strength and prevent getting undernourished.

**How does the mother benefit from breastfeeding?**
Breastfeeding has many benefits for the baby and also for the mother. Breastfeeding mothers return to pre-pregnancy weight earlier. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of ovarian and breast cancer and helps space pregnancies—exclusive breastfeeding of babies under 6 months has a hormonal effect which often induces a lack of menstruation and is therefore a natural (though not fail-safe) method of birth control.