

BEHAVIOUR 1: COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING FROM AGE 6 MONTHS

Behaviour to promote

Mothers should continue to breastfeed until their child is 2 years old, but from the age of 6 months, it is essential to introduce nutritious complementary foods to your child's diet. Nutritious foods include 'enriched porridge' ("bouillie"),¹ fruits, green vegetables, fish, meat, nuts and beans. Simple porridge (cereal-based porridge without supplementary ingredients) does not provide sufficient nutrients for young children. If you enrich the porridge with nutritious foods, this will improve the health and immune system of your child.

Reasons

According to the DHS 2013/14 79% of children aged 6-9 months are receiving complementary foods. Few mothers provide a varied diet for their children (including vegetables, legumes, nuts, fruits, meat / fish / poultry, beans/tubers).

From the age of 6 months, breastmilk alone is not sufficient for addressing all an infant's nutritional needs; they need to eat complementary nutritious foods too. Begin by giving them soft or mashed foods (such as porridge) and then gradually increase the consistency of the food.

A good diet includes food that is clean, varied and rich in vitamins and nutrients. It should include a variety of nutritious foods, such as vegetables (including green leaves), beans, peas, lentils, dried caterpillars, fruits, nuts, peanut butter, fish / meat / poultry, eggs and other dairy products (e.g. yoghurt).² This rich and varied diet is necessary for the good health of children and the whole family.

Barriers to behaviour change

Ideas

- Most children under 5 years of age receive a diet that is not sufficiently varied and is very low in nutrition.
- Some women do not know when complementary foods should be introduced.
- Few women know the nutritional value of local foods. It is also possible that these nutritious foods are not considered to be "traditional" foods so we should promote the use of these foods.
- Availability of certain foods and cooking equipment can be an environmental obstacle to improving complementary feeding practices.
- Few women prepare enriched porridge, because 1) they do not have the money to buy all the ingredients (or believe that the ingredients are more expensive than they can afford), or 2) because they believe they don't have the time to prepare the porridge.
- In war torn areas of eastern DRC, people living in insecurity are often unable to tend their fields and so can become dependent on humanitarian aid.
- In certain tribes, certain foods may be associated with adverse outcomes (e.g. among Tshokwe people eggs are prohibited for pregnant women, for fear that their baby will be born without hair.)
- In some rural areas particular meats are reserved only for men and women and children do not eat them (e.g. snake, monkey, pangolin).

Factors contributing to behaviour change

- Most women continue to breastfeed until their child is two years old.
- From 6 months, almost all children are given porridge (BUT a simple, sweet porridge).
- The majority of women trust health workers to inform them about child nutrition.
- Local nutritious foods are available in all districts, even if women do not always know about them.

¹ Lingala & Kikongo: Poto Poto; in Swahili: Buyi or Uji; in Chiluba in: Musabu.

² Lingala: vegetable = ndunda, fruit = mbuma, fish = mbisi =, meat = niama, chicken = soso, poultry or birds = ndeke, egg= liki, eggs = maki.

Chiluba: vegetable = biseki-seki, fruit = bibuma, fish = mishipa, meat = munyinyi, chicken = nzolu, egg = djii, eggs = mayii.

Swahili: fruit = matunda, samaki = fish, meat = nyama, poultry or bird = ndeke, chicken = kuku, egg = liyayi, eggs = mayayi.

Kikongo: vegetable = ndunda, fruit = mbuma, fish = mbisi ya masa, meat = mbisi ya nfinda, chicken = nsusu, poultry or bird = ndeke, egg = diaki, eggs = maki.