



The Infant Feeding in Emergencies Core Group is the peak body for infants and young child feeding in emergencies. It functions as the Global Thematic Working Group under the United Nations Nutrition Cluster. The IFE Core Group has created the following top-line messages to facilitate clear and accurate communication on Gaza and similar emergencies.

- ❖ Breastfeeding is lifesaving. Keep going, start or restart breastfeeding. (if speaking to mothers)
- ❖ Support mothers to breastfeed - it's lifesaving.
- ❖ Do not donate or provide powdered infant formula – it's dangerous.
- ❖ Feed and support the mother so she can feed and care for the baby.
- ❖ In emergencies, breastfeeding, by the mother or by another woman, is the only guaranteed source of food and water for babies. Supply of infant formula cannot be guaranteed, so breastfeeding must be supported.
- ❖ If breastfeeding is not possible, use ready-to-use liquid infant formula (not powdered infant formula) fed by cup or spoon, not bottles.
- ❖ Very malnourished babies need specialised care and feeding. They cannot necessarily tolerate infant formula.

More information and resources

Message	Why?
Breastfeeding is lifesaving. Keep going, start or restart breastfeeding. (if speaking to mothers)	1. Breastmilk provides the nutrition, hydration and immune protection that babies need. It is the first and most effective protection against newborns and infants. It protects against malnutrition and infections that worsen under starvation conditions. 2. As infant formula is not a sterile product, it may contain harmful bacteria. Furthermore, powdered infant formula needs clean water, fuel, and safe preparation. Without these things it can easily make babies sick or even lead to death. 3. You are not alone. You can and should ask for help with breastfeeding and with food and support for yourself. You can get breastfeeding support from: - GINA (need a local contact) - Others? 4. Resources for re/starting breastfeeding: - https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/increasing-breastmilk-supply/ - https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/drip-drop-feeding/ - https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/hand-expression/
Support mothers to breastfeed - it's lifesaving.	1. See Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (IYCF-E) Support – Lifesaving Interventions in Arabic, English, Spanish and French
Do not donate or provide powdered infant formula – it's dangerous.	1. As infant formula is not a sterile product, it may contain harmful bacteria. Furthermore, powdered infant formula needs clean water, fuel, and safe preparation. Without these things, it can easily make babies sick or even lead to death. 2. Providing infant formula without ensuring safe preparation increases risk of malnutrition and mortality. Donations of these products take away from vital efforts to provide food, clean water, and support. 3. Donate funds to trusted humanitarian agencies working in Gaza to help them deliver flexible, effective aid tailored to needs. 4. Resources: Story of untargeted formula donations in emergency contexts - comic strip and video
Feed and support the mother so she can feed and care for the baby.	1. Even if a mother is somewhat malnourished, her body prioritises milk production by drawing on her own nutrient and fat stores, so she can usually continue breastfeeding without significant loss of milk quantity or quality. However, supporting the mother's nutrition is essential to protect her health and help sustain lactation 2. Community and local aid efforts must prioritize maternal wellbeing as a critical step to protect infants. 3. Caring for babies includes Skin to Skin Contact (SSC) as Nurturing Care for both mother and child. This not only helps to increase maternal milk supply, but also mother-child psychosocial care and child protection.
In emergencies, breastfeeding, by the mother or by another woman, is the only guaranteed source of food and water for babies. Supply of infant formula cannot be guaranteed, so breastfeeding must be supported.	1. Breastmilk is the only source of complete, safe, and accessible nutrition for infants aged 0-6 months, and constitutes a major part of the diet for 6-11 month infants, and even up to 2 years. This is especially when food is scarce. 2. In crisis settings where food and clean water are unavailable, breastmilk remains safe, free, and accessible. It prevents life-threatening diarrhea, dehydration, and malnutrition. 3. Breastfeeding support is a life-saving, cost-effective intervention in hunger crises. 4. Resources on breastfeeding by another woman (wet nursing): - UNICEF's Technical and operational guidance for increasing access to breastmilk through wet nursing in emergency settings. - Save the Children's wet nursing screening tool - IFE Core Group's wet nursing infographic
If breastfeeding is not possible, use ready-to-use infant formula (not powdered infant formula) fed by cup or spoon, not bottles.	1. Cups and spoons are easier to clean; bottles can harbour bacteria and make babies sick. 2. Resources on cup feeding: - https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/cup-feeding-2/ - https://illi.org/news/cup-feeding/
Very malnourished babies need specialised care and feeding. They cannot	1. Specialised care takes place in malnutrition treatment centres, not at home.

necessarily tolerate infant formula.	
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Resources can be found at:

- GINA (Gaza Infant Nutrition Initiative). [Breastfeeding support resources \(Arabic\)](#)
- **Supporting, Protecting, and Sustaining Breastfeeding in Conflict Zones: GINA Presentation**, (Part 1 & Part 2 are on Gaza)
- [WVI Common Myths about Breastfeeding in Emergencies](#)
- LLL Asia website: <https://www.lllasia.org/arabic-emergency-info> and <https://www.lllasia.org/arabic-information.html> (in Arabic)
- LLLI multilingual emergency resources page: <https://llli.org/breastfeeding-info/infant-feeding-emergencies-multilingual/>
- <https://iycfehub.org/> (including in Arabic)
- Breastfeeding International, including:
 - <https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/get-support/>
 - <https://breastfeedinginternational.org/resources/skin-to-skin-contact-2/>

All IYCF-E interventions should comply with the Operational Guidance for Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (OG-IFE), the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, and the Sphere Standards.

This technical note was prepared by members of the Infant Feeding in Emergencies Core Group (IFE-CG) which is coordinated by the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN). For more information on the IFE-CG, please visit: <https://www.ennonline.net/network/ife-core-group>