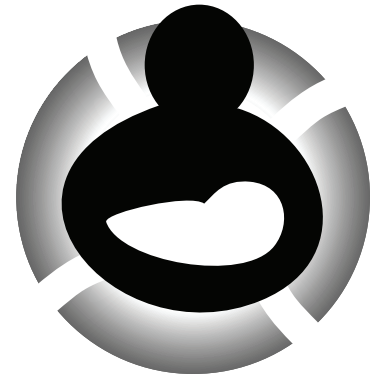


# Breastfeeding: A Vital Emergency Response Are You Ready?



## Breastfeeding Support Checklist for Health Workers

In an emergency, breastfeeding saves lives! Breastfeeding is always sanitary and safe, requires no electricity or water, and helps calm infants in stressful and traumatic situations. Mothers who breastfeed release hormones that help them relax, and they can continue to make plenty of milk, even under the most stressful situations. It is even possible for women who originally chose not to breastfeed to induce lactation when food for baby is scarce or may be contaminated. **You** can offer gold-level support for breastfeeding mothers in several key ways:

- Don't wait until an emergency to learn about the importance of breastfeeding. The best time to learn about how to support breastfeeding mothers is **before** an emergency occurs.
- Contact your local breastfeeding coalition or an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) to explore in-person training opportunities for yourself or your staff. You can also explore the "Speaker Directory" at the ILCA website at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org) to review potential speakers who can assist you.
- Include breastfeeding support as part of your health facility and/or community disaster preparedness plans. Invite local IBCLCs and other breastfeeding advocates to serve on your team to explore ways to incorporate breastfeeding promotion and support into emergency response policies and practice.
- Promote breastfeeding with all pregnant and new mothers, and work to establish evidence-based policies and practices within your health institution that support breastfeeding. For example: assure that mothers and infants are able to be together skin-to-skin immediately after birth, delay routine procedures until after the first breastfeed, and review policies to assure that mothers and infants are able to remain together 24 hours a day.
- Work toward becoming a Baby-Friendly Hospital by implementing the UNICEF/WHO "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding." Research shows implementing even some of these important evidence-based steps can significantly increase breastfeeding rates. Learn more at [www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/](http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/)
- **Ban the bags!** If your hospital or practice provides "free" give-aways supplied by infant formula companies, work to eliminate them. These gimmicks undermine breastfeeding and have been shown by research to contribute to early supplementing and weaning. Learn more at [www.banthebags.org](http://www.banthebags.org).
- Tell mothers that you are proud of them. New mothers typically lack confidence, and they will long remember the words of care and support from their physician, midwife or nurse.
- Allow IBCLCs to become a vital part of the healthcare "circle of care" for new families. IBCLCs provide direct assistance to new breastfeeding families in a wide variety of situations, including emergencies. You can find an IBCLC by going to the "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org).



During and after an actual emergency, encourage mothers to exclusively breastfeed. Continuing to breastfeed will help them keep up their milk production and protect their baby against disease and malnutrition.

*\* Remind relief workers to provide an environment with privacy, if needed, to help breastfeeding mothers feel supported as they care for their children.*