



# Several steps being taken by the government to promote breastfeeding

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The data on nutritional indicators including Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices is captured under the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) conducted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. As per the recent NFHS-4 report, 41.6% children under 3 years of age are breastfed within one hour of birth.

Government is taking following steps for promotion of breastfeeding in the country:

National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2006, have been issued, through which optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices including breastfeeding are emphasised.

Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1993, as amended 2003, has been enacted in the country to protect, promote and support breastfeeding and ensure proper use of infant foods.

The restructured ICDS Mission also aims to increase Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices in the country. Under the Care and Nutrition Counseling component, focus is to provide counseling to women on issues relating to infant feeding practices.

The Maternity Benefit Program (MBP), which is a centrally sponsored Conditional Maternity Benefit scheme of the Ministry for pregnant and lactating women, encourages women to follow optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding practices including early and exclusive breast feeding for the first six months. Under the scheme, cash incentives are provided partly compensating for their wage loss subject to fulfilment of health and nutrition conditions, which includes exclusive breastfeeding until the child is 6 months of age.

Food and Nutrition Board under the Ministry is engaged in creating awareness on health and nutrition issues with strong focus on 'Infant and Young Child Feeding' (IYCF). "World Breastfeeding Week" is also celebrated every year from 1-7 August by organizing various activities such as State level Workshop/ Seminar, lecture-cum-practical demonstration, etc. for creating greater awareness. Awareness is also generated through audio-visual medium for promotion of optimal IYCF.

Recently, Mothers' Absolute Affection (MAA) programme has been launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to promote and strengthen breastfeeding through health system strengthening.

This information was given by Minister of State for Women & Child Development, Smt Krishna Raj in reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

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