



**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT**

Block - D, 1st Floor, Dispur,

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No.SWD.229/2013/138

Dated Dispur the 29th April, 2020

From: Addl. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam.
Social Welfare Department, Dispur.

To: The Deputy Commissioners / Principal Secretaries/
District Social Welfare Officers (All).

Sub: Reinforcing optimal Infant and Young Child Nutrition behaviours during
COVID19.

Sir/Madam,

As you are aware that with the COVID19 pandemic, there has also been a surge in concerns and myths around infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices. Taking the right messages around IYCF to community in the context of COVID19 remains a critical nutrition intervention. In this context, districts are advised to take care of below mentioned action points related to IYCF during COVID19.

Recommended behaviours for IYCF during COVID19:

The World Health Organization advises caregivers and families with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to continue the recommended IYCF practices with the necessary hygiene precautions. Even during the COVID19 pandemic, all recommended IYCF practices remain the same, including containment areas/red zones. There are being reiterated below:

- Initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth.
- Exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months.
- Introduce age-appropriate, adequate, safe, and properly fed complementary foods starting from 6 months up to 2 years of age.
- Continue breastfeeding for up to 2 years of age or beyond.

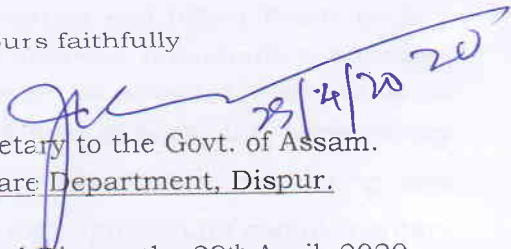
Implementation of the Infant Milk Substitutes (IMS) Act

- The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act (IMS Act) bans any kind of promotion of Infant Formula, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods for 0-2 years of children. It has been observed that in some districts, breastmilk substitutes are being distributed as part of COVID19 response. Uncontrolled distribution of breast milk substitutes in emergency situations can lead to early and unnecessary cessation of breastfeeding. Emphasis should be on protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and ensuring timely, safe and appropriate complementary feeding.
- District administration should not accept infant formula milk (Baby Milk Powder) or packaged infant foods for mass distribution from any stakeholder. There should not be mass distribution of breast milk substitutes and packaged infant foods through ICDS Anganwadi or any other Government channel.
- Districts to monitor and review the ground level situation in district, in order to prevent any such violation of IMS act occurring again in future, including during or post flood rehabilitation/response.

**Role of Anganwadi Workers:**

- Increase awareness and knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding, age-appropriate complementary feeding and harmful effects of breastmilk substitutes among all stakeholders in emergency situations.
- Reassure and support all mothers to initiate and continue to breastfeed their infants – even if they are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- Advise breastfeeding mothers with symptoms of COVID19 to
 - Wash her hands with soap and clean water for 20 seconds before and after contact with her baby.
 - Wear a mask when feeding or caring for baby
 - Cover mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing with bent elbow or use a tissue to prevent droplets from spraying. Safely dispose of used tissues and wash her hands with soap and clean water afterwards.
 - Feed expressed breastmilk to baby, if mother is severely ill and unable to breastfeed directly.
- If mothers/caregivers of children (6m to 23m age) show COVID19 symptoms, advise them to:
 - Wash hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds before preparing food and before feeding the baby.
 - Clean food preparation areas, with soap and clean water. Feed baby from her or his own clean spoon and bowl.
 - Wear a mask when feeding or caring for baby
 - Cover mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing with bent elbow or use a tissue to prevent droplets from spraying. Safely dispose of used tissues after use and wash hands with soap and clean water afterwards.
 - When possible, try to feed a variety of food, including fruits, vegetables, legumes and animal source food such as eggs, meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products.
 - If the child gets sick, she/he will need extra fluids and food to recover faster. To breastfeed the child more often and encourage her/him to eat soft and appetizing food during sickness. After sickness, feed the child more often than usual for about two weeks, to help the child regain strength.

Yours faithfully

 29/4/20 20
Addl. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam.
Social Welfare Department, Dispur.

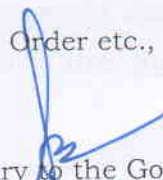
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Copy to:

1. The Director, Social Welfare, Assam, Uzanbazar, Guwahati-1 for information.
2. The State Project Director, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Sarumataria, Zakir Hussain Path, Bye Lane-11, Guwahati-36 for information.

By Order etc.,


Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Assam.
Social Welfare Department, Dispur.