

**CARING FOR NEWBORNS  
AND CHILDREN  
IN THE COMMUNITY**

**A TRAINING COURSE  
FOR COMMUNITY  
HEALTH WORKERS**



# **Caring for the child's healthy growth and development**

**PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL**



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The materials in the series *Caring for Newborns and Children in the Community*, and these materials on *Caring for the child's healthy growth and development*, are fully compatible with the IMCI guidelines for first-level health workers. They are intended to serve as an additional tool to implement the IMCI strategy in countries that support the provision of basic health services for children by community health workers.

# PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

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# INTRODUCTION

## Counsel the family on caring for the child's healthy growth and development



The survival of children through their early years depends on the adults who care for them.

Children need to eat well in order to grow, be healthy and strong. They need protection from illness and injury as they explore the world around them. When they are sick, they need good medical care. Adults must meet many needs of a growing child.

Children also need adults who give them love, affection, and appreciation. They need adults who spend time playing and communicating with them. Adults help children from birth to learn the skills that will make it possible for them, too, to become competent, happy, and caring adults.

Community health workers support the efforts of families and other caregivers as they raise their children. Their support can be critical to the child's healthy growth and development, especially when caregivers also face poverty, isolation, chronic illness, and other difficult conditions.

## Objectives

At the end of this course, participants will be able to counsel families to:

- Breastfeed young children and give their children nutritious complementary foods.
- Play and communicate with their children to help them learn, and to strengthen their relationship with their children.
- Prevent childhood illnesses and injury.
- Recognize signs of illness and take their sick children to a health facility for care.



*Photo WHO MCA*

# FEED THE YOUNG INFANT AND CHILD (UP TO AGE 6 MONTHS)

Good nutrition before birth—through the mother’s good health—and in the first years of life improves the child’s growth and the child’s ability to learn. Also, good nutrition helps prevent illness.

Poorly nourished children do not grow well. They are shorter than other children the same age. They are less active when they play and have less interest in exploring and learning.

Also, poorly nourished children are often sick. And illness is a special challenge for a body that is already weak from poor nutrition.

Over a third of the children who die from common childhood illness—diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria, measles, and other infections—are poorly nourished. Helping young children get better nutrition helps prevent early deaths.

## Objective

Participants will counsel others:

- To exclusively breastfeed the young infant and child (up to age 6 months)—how much, how often, and how to responsively breastfeed the child on demand.
- To help the mother to hold the child in a good position and attach the child effectively to the breast.
- To identify and solve common problems that can interfere with exclusive breastfeeding.

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## The importance of breastfeeding the young infant and child

Breastfeeding is important for the *healthy growth* of the young child. Breast milk continues to be important even after the child begins taking complementary foods at age 6 months. (WHO and UNICEF recommend continuing breastfeeding until the child is age 2 years and older.)

Breastfeeding also *strengthens the relationship between mother and child*. A close, loving relationship is a foundation for the mother’s important caring role from the child’s birth and as

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