



Feeding Young Children 6 TO 24 MONTHS OF AGE



Zambian Complementary Feeding Book

2ND EDITION - 2015



The National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) is a statutory body established by the government of Zambia through the act of parliament No. 41 of 1967 under the Ministry of Health. It is a promotional and advisory organ to the government on matters concerning food and nutrition.

Vision

To be Zambia's centre of excellence in leading food and nutrition actions for optimal nutrition

Mission

To provide efficient and effective leadership for coordinated food and nutrition action in Zambia

FOREWORD

Food and nutrition security is a human right and a cornerstone for economic, social and human development. In Zambia, ensuring adequate food and nutrition especially among the vulnerable populations – mothers, children, and low income groups – is a serious challenge. Under-nutrition in early life, impacts negatively on intellectual and physical development and health outcomes.

The levels of under-nutrition in the country have remained consistently high and addressing this challenge requires coordinated efforts from different actors and stakeholders to invest significantly in better nutrition. The Five-Year National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan (NFNSP) 2011-2015 is Zambia's first multi-sectoral response to combat malnutrition. Its strategic directions give a major priority to the promotion of the First 1,000 Most Critical Days to prevent stunting in children less than two years of age.

This complementary feeding book aims to prevent child stunting by promoting good infant and young child feeding practices. The book has been written in the basic language for ease of usage by all women of child bearing age, especially pregnant and lactating mothers as well as all other child care-givers including fathers of children under the age of two.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is for everyone who cares about improving the nutrition and health of infants and young children. It is especially meant for community service providers such as community nutrition promoters, peer educators and other development agents from the health, education, community development, Local Government and agricultural sectors working with families and community groups.

The book is intended as a companion to the Growth Promotion Counseling Cards, to be used primarily by community nutrition promoters. It provides information and guidance on the selection and preparation of locally available, nutritious and safe complementary foods that are easy to prepare in order to feed infants and young children aged 6 to 24 months.

The book is divided into four parts: The first part provides basic information that an infant and young child caregiver needs to know about complementary feeding. It also gives the recommended feeding frequencies for children between 6 -24 months of age. The second part explains the value of family foods in complementary feeding. Part three explains local food measures used in the preparation of the recipes in this book and gives useful hints on processing complementary foods including proper hygiene and sanitation. Part four provides suggested recipes for complementary foods with nutrition information. The recipes are divided into porridges, mashed foods, relishes, beverages and finger foods. Part four also provides extra information for young child caregivers to be more knowledgeable about improving young child nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

The first 1000 days of life are the most critical because it is a period in which a child's growth is most rapid. When a child is not well fed during this period, it may result in poor growth and even irreversibly damages that will prevent the child from being optimally productive in life. When a child is born and up until the age of 6 completed months, breastmilk is the best food to give the baby. It is clean, safe, protects the child from diseases and contains the energy and nutrients that the child needs to grow and develop.

However, after the age of 6 completed months, breastmilk alone is no longer sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of a growing child. This period is characterised by an increase in the prevalence of malnutrition often due to poor feeding practices. Appropriate feeding includes correct food preparation methods, good hygiene, as well as child supervision during feeding.

Overall in Zambia, only 11% of children aged 6-23 months are fed appropriately based on recommended infant and young child feeding practices (Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) 2013-14). Further assessments done in 2013-14, through ZDHS show that:

- 73% of children less than age 6 months are given breastmilk only but not exclusively breastfed for the full 6 months as required. This puts young children at risk of infections like diarrhoea which inhibits good growth.
- Moreover, foods introduced mainly consist of plain starch porridge which has fewer nutrients than breastmilk, thus contributing to early growth faltering.
- Only 22% of children have a diverse diet, and 42% are fed frequently according to the recommended practices.

PART ONE: BASICS ON COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING

What is Complementary Feeding?

Complementary feeding is giving a baby from 6-24 months of age other foods in addition to breastmilk. Examples of complementary foods are soft, mashed or crushed foods like porridge, bananas, mangoes, pawpaw, and fruit juices, finely chopped or shredded green leafy vegetables, beans, groundnuts, sunflower seeds, fish and other animal foods.

When complementary foods are introduced, breastfeeding should still continue for up to 2 years of age or beyond. Previously, the term “weaning” was used, but this was changed to complementary feeding because there was confusion about its meaning. Some people thought that it meant stopping breastfeeding; others thought that it meant the period during which the child changed from having only breast milk to only family foods.

It is important to give complementary foods after 6 completed months because at this age the baby's guts are mature enough to start digesting additional foods. Furthermore, breastmilk alone is not enough to provide the required amounts of nutrients to the body.

Improving local complementary foods

Good complementary foods are rich in energy, protein, micro-nutrients and are easy for young children to eat and digest. Ingredients for making them must be locally available, safe, affordable and easy to prepare. The traditional cassava, maize or rice porridge recipes, for example, can be improved to increase the nutritional value by:

- Adding pounded groundnuts, beans or dried fish
- Adding shredded or pounded green leafy vegetables
- Adding red palm oil or vegetable oil to increase the energy and nutrition content of the porridge without increasing its bulk (volume).
- Reducing the salt content to a pinch of salt per feed and not more than 4 pinches of salt per day (remember to use iodised salt).

One important benefit of preparing homemade baby food is that you decide exactly what it should contain so that you are sure it is fresh, safe, healthy and affordable.

What you need to know about complementary feeding

Frequency - The food given should be in response to a child's signals of hunger and that the meal frequency and feeding methods are suitable for a child's age (see table 1 on page 5).

Amount - The amount of food given to the young child at each meal should provide sufficient energy, protein and micronutrients to meet the growing child's nutritional needs.

Texture - The food consistency should be thick enough to stay on the spoon and soft enough for the child to eat without difficulty.

Variety – Feeding different types of food that provide different nutrients to meet the child's nutritional needs.

Active feeding - Supervising and encouraging your child to eat enough food at each meal.

Hygiene - Foods should be hygienically prepared, stored and fed with clean hands using clean utensils – bowls, cups and spoons.



Feeding infants and young children

Small children have small stomachs and can only eat small quantities of food at each meal; they also grow very fast and are physically active. Therefore, they need a good combination of the main family dish and other foods that are used to make relishes.

If the child is well fed, he/she will be happier and likely to cry less. The child will remain healthy, will not be sick often and the caregiver will have more time for household chores and other duties.

Introducing new foods to the baby

When introducing new foods, caregivers are advised to give the child one new food at a time, starting with small quantities (See table 1 below) over a 3 to 5 day period. As the child gets used to eating a

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