



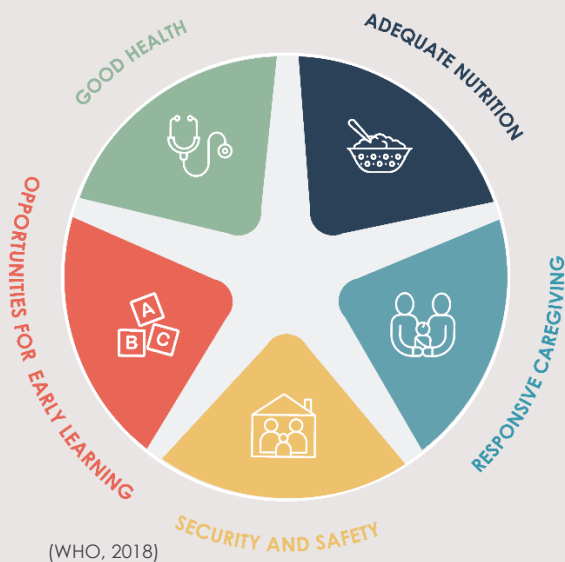
HOW TO...

encourage mom and dad to ensure baby gets healthy food

Sikunye seeks to equip and support churches to care for families in the First Thousand Days (FTD). This reflection is part of a range of workshops hosted by Sikunye, aimed at equipping churches to understand the nurturing care framework.

Listen to audio recording [here](#)

Watch the video recording [here](#)



what is nurturing care?

Nurturing care is what all children need to thrive. It is defined as a stable environment that is sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs, and that provides protection from harm, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive, and developmentally stimulating. These environments offer acceptance and a sense of belonging and connection demonstrated through an active and constant relationship with the child or adolescent (Berry & Malek, p52. 2017).i

what is adequate nutrition?



NUTRITION

Adequate nutrition refers to the maternal and child nutrition – why both? Because we know that the nutritional status of the mother during pregnancy affects her health and well-being and that of her unborn child. After birth, the mother's nutritional status affects her ability to breastfeed and provide adequate care.ii

When we talk about maternal and child nutrition being important, this includes:

- Support for early initiation of exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding after 6 months (the WHO recommends that a mom breastfeeds for 2 years, whilst introducing solids only after 6 months)
- Support for complementary feeding and for a healthy family diet
- Micronutrient supplementation for mother and child, as needed
- Fortification of staple foods like maize & bread with vitamin A, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pyridoxine, folic acid, iron and zinc
- Growth monitoring and promotion – this happens at the clinic where the baby's weight etc is recorded in the Road to Health book. It is important mom goes for regular clinic visits
- Deworming
- Support for appropriate child feeding during illness
- Management of moderate and severe malnutrition as well as being overweight or obese

Adequate nutrition includes a range of things, but for this resource we spoke about **exclusive breastfeeding** with Ester Williams, a certified Doula and Breastfeeding Counsellor with [The Zoe Project](#)

“Breastfeeding saves more lives than any other preventive intervention!”

- UNICEF -

what is exclusive breastfeeding?

Exclusive breastfeeding means giving your baby only breastmilk with no other food (no water, juice, formula, animal milk or solid foods) except for vitamins, minerals and medicines prescribed by a doctor or nurse.ⁱⁱⁱ

The World Health Organisation encourages that:

- Breastfeeding be initiated within one hour of birth;
- Infants feed on nothing but breast milk for the first six months of life;
- Infants continue breastfeeding until at least the age of two; and
- Infants be introduced to adequate, safe and complementary foods after six months



Ester said: the word “exclusive” starts with “ex” so whatever mom is to exclude also starts with “ex” – exclude bottles, exclude formula, exclude all liquids – baby **only needs breastmilk until he/she turns six months**. After six months mom can start to introduce healthy and nutritious food (e.g. carrots, butternut, green vegetables, fruit).

Ester’s tip: mom can eat these foods whilst breastfeeding as mom’s health is important, but also baby will be used to the taste once you start him/her on these solid foods. Do not feed baby cereals after six months as that encourages baby to like sweet foods.

Read pages 3 – 7 in The [Road to Health book](#) for information on how to breastfeed and what are healthy foods to feed baby.

Watch: videos on [nutrition](#) and [breastfeeding](#) – and these can be shared with mom.

What are the benefits of breastfeeding?

Page in [What you should know about breastfeeding](#) booklet

You can get this for free from any maternity clinic



There are benefits for baby:

- Colostrum is the first milk – it is thought to be baby’s first immunisation as it is packed with nutrients and protective substances to fight infections
- Breastmilk contains antibodies (Ester’s idea: it is like the breastmilk has an army of bodies that fights against infection and diseases) which strengthens baby’s immune system
- Baby gets all the nutrients he/she needs to grow and develop healthy from breastmilk
- Holding baby close and doing skin to skin promotes bonding with baby
- Breastmilk is readily available and does not have to be prepared, it is also free

And there are benefits for mom:

- Breastfeeding promotes the contraction of the uterus to return to normal and prevents excessive bleeding
- Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer
- Mom can lose weight by exclusively breastfeeding and maintaining a healthy diet

Remember: mom should try start breastfeeding within the first hour after birth as this allows baby to get the colostrum to stimulate bowel movement, it regulates baby’s

temperature, and it encourages baby to latch and feed which in turn stimulates the production of milk – best of all it helps mom and baby bond!

“Breastfeeding is not a one-woman job”^{iv}

why do mums need support to breastfeed?

Watch: this [video](#) about some of the challenges new moms face whilst breastfeeding. Moms may just not know what to expect or what to do. When challenging moms around breastfeeding straight after birth, or how mom is breastfeeding, Ester is regularly told “it is what my mom said or did” or “I don't have milk.” Often new moms are given incorrect information by family members or continue the myths around breastfeeding (e.g. Stoney beer helps with breastmilk production: this is a myth. Stoney beer is not ginger beer, but sugar water that does not stimulate breastmilk production.) and therefore we need to involve the mothers, grandmothers, the fathers, and whole community to raise awareness around what is exclusive breastfeeding, how to breastfeed, the benefits of breastfeeding and break the myths on breastfeeding!

In South Africa we have the **Tshwane Declaration** which encourages a whole society approach to supporting, promoting and encouraging breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding can be hard, and when it gets hard, without support or encouragement to continue, mom is more likely to give up. But breastfeeding is so worth it – and it is the one area that has such an impact on children's growth – so the question to ask is how as a society we can support, encourage and promote breastfeeding? If we want to see the rates of breastfeeding increase, we can all play a part in helping women successfully breastfeed – whether you are mom, dad, neighbour, congregant, pastor, teacher etc. – we all play a part!

With [World Breastfeeding Week](#) in August of each year, **the local church can play their part by:**

- Inviting moms and grandmothers from the church and surrounding community to a tea where a guest speaker can give good information around breastfeeding – this can help moms to know what to expect if they are pregnant or support moms who are breastfeeding
- Encouraging mothers in the community to support or mentor new moms
- Making the church venue somewhere that moms can feel supported to breastfeed

- Encouraging dads to do skin to skin
- Invite dads to a talk and break some of the myths around breastmilk, whilst giving him tips on how he can support mom (e.g. bringing her a healthy meal, taking a glass of water)
- Follow and promote social media during World Breastfeeding Week

what if mom is struggling to breastfeed?

Sometimes breastfeeding does not go according to plan, and as we are not the experts, please encourage mom to seek professional advice and support from her local clinic as they will have a breastfeeding counsellor. Other information you can give mom is:

- Read The Road to Health book, or **Page 24** in the [What you should know about breastfeeding](#) which is available at the clinic
- Encourage mom to contact organisations such as [Le Leche League](#), [The Zoe Project](#)

remember:

- By just being an encouraging voice and present to listen, mom is more likely to continue breastfeeding when it gets hard!
- The more mom breastfeeds, the more milk she will produce
- **Do not shame mom** or make her feel guilty if she chooses to stop breastfeeding, or if she chooses to formula feed

Here are some useful resources for mom: [Kelly Mom](#) breastfeeding resources

what if mom has to return to work?

Mom may have to return to work, how do we support mom to continue breastfeeding? Or how can we [advocate for breastfeeding in our workplaces? \(read page 11\)](#)

Ester's tips for moms returning to work:

- Mom has a right to take 30minutes break twice a day to express breastmilk. She can store this in the fridge to take home for baby to be fed when she is at work
- When mom is with baby she should try to breastfeed
- Express milk and store it for baby in icetrays and each time you want to feed baby remove one and let it defrost. Do not put it in the microwave!

a healthy diet after 6 months

From 6 months onwards, mom and dad can start to introduce healthy solids to baby's diet. **Read: pages 3 – 7** in The [Road to Health book](#) for information on what are healthy foods to feed baby at different ages – especially in the First Thousand Days. Make sure that vegetables are washed before use, hands are washed before preparing food and that all foods are cooked and mashed to prevent diseases or choking. Baby must not be left alone whilst eating.

Remember: healthy food promotes good brain development



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- ⁱ World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank Group (2018) *Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential*. Geneva: World Health Organisation. Retrieved from: 9789241514064-eng.pdf (who.int)
 - ⁱⁱ https://i0.wp.com/nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/en_opel.jpg?ssl=1
 - ⁱⁱⁱ What you should know about breastfeeding. Side by Side booklet. Available at <https://sidebyside.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/076-2020-Breastfeeding-QA-Booklet-FA.pdf>
 - ^{iv} World Health Organisation: available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/breastfeeding-is-not-a-one-woman-job>