

Connecticut WIC Program:

Consistent Breastfeeding Education Messages: Breastfeeding During Emergencies

Why it is important?

The WIC program promotes and supports breastfeeding as the optimal feeding method for infants. Women who breastfeed may be exposed to certain challenges during emergencies. It is important to educate moms on how best to take care of themselves and their babies during an emergency.

WIC's Goal:

Provide women with the information and education on how to breastfeed during an emergency.

Objectives: Prior to and during a crisis, a participant will be able to:

1. Make a list of important phone numbers (utilizing the *Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Breastfeeding* developed by WIC).
2. Prepare an emergency kit.
3. Utilize online resources dedicated to providing guidance for breastfeeding women during emergencies.
4. Stay calm and know you are prepared to take care of yourself and your baby with these resources.

Affirmation:

- That's great that you are curious about how to feed your baby in an emergency situation. We have some great tools to help both you and baby be prepared.
- A lot of moms are surprised to learn that in an emergency, breastmilk continues to be the best food supply for their baby.
- You are not alone; other moms are concerned about what to do in an emergency.
- I can see you really care about your baby because you are so concerned about making sure in a crisis you have all you need to provide them with the best nutrition.
- It's amazing that you recognize your breastmilk supply is linked to your availability to food and water as well. We have some great strategies to keep both you and baby secure in a crisis.
- We know it can be stressful to breastfeed in a crisis, but you are doing a great job! Keep up the good work!

Key Educational Messages:

- Human milk is the safest and healthiest food for an infant during a disaster or emergency.
- Clean water, a clean and safe environment and sterile feeding utensils are often difficult to attain during a disaster or emergency so formula may become contaminated during preparation.
- Contaminated formula has been proven to cause diarrhea, infections, malnutrition and death in infants.
- Breastfeeding benefits both mom and baby by decreasing stress levels, providing comfort and security, and by keeping the baby warm.
- Breastfeeding moms NEED support, additional food and water, assistance with initiating a feeding, latching, hand expressing, re-lactation and counseling.
- Formula should not be offered to a nursing or newly postpartum mom to avoid stress and doubt about breastfeeding ability and need.

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Activities:

It is important to focus on the resources that are available in the community and for WIC staff to develop relationships with agencies that are in contact with WIC participants during emergencies.

- Local agency WIC staff may want to contact the local City/Town Halls in their agencies communities to inquire on location of breastfeeding friendly spaces in shelters during emergencies.
- Go through the Emergency Preparedness Checklist together
- Ask what emergency numbers they would have on their refrigerator or on hand
- Have parents list 3 items in an emergency kit

Websites:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/features/disaster-planning-parents/index.html>

USBC: <http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/emergencies>

Handouts/Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/DisasterFactSheet6-2020.pdf> (For staff)

Emergency Helpline: <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov>

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response: <http://www.phe.gov/asprblog/lists/posts/post.aspx?id=41>

Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness & Response, An Office of the Administration for Children & Families: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/resource/infant-feeding-during-disasters>

Infant Feeding DURING DISASTERS

BREASTFEEDING matters because...

- It can be impacted if support is even a short period of time. Breastfeeding cannot be put on hold until the disaster is over.
- It protects infants from the risks of using contaminated water supplies during a disaster.
- It can help protect against respiratory infection & diarrhea, which can be fatal to displaced families.
- Breast milk is available all the time without needing other supplies.

Barriers to BREASTFEEDING during a DISASTER

- Lack of lactation support, whether it is a new mother, or a mother with a newly-weaned baby.
- Being away from home - displaced or having to relocate.
- Being separated from people who usually support the mother.
- Lack of privacy, security, comfort, clean lights & quiet in emergency shelters.

BREASTFEEDING benefits

- Breastfeeding Mothers**
 - Reduce their risks for:
 - Ovarian cancer
 - Breast cancer
 - Type 2 diabetes
- Breastfed Infants**
 - Have a reduced risk of:
 - SIDS¹
 - Lower respiratory infections
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Asthma
 - Obesity
- Workforce & environmental**
 - Infants have less illness so mothers can less work.
 - Less trash & plastic waste compared to formula & bottle supplies.
- Communities who promote breastfeeding**
 - Cost save \$11 billion annually.
 - Prevent 1,000 deaths per year.
 - 200,000+ acres for new babies that 6 months of life.

How RESPONDERS can help

- Ensure access to healthcare providers with lactation experience.
- Create safe locations for pregnant & breastfeeding women.
- Assure mothers that breastfeeding can provide sufficient nutrition for babies when other foods aren't available.
- Keep families together.
- Provide water & food for breastfeeding mothers.
- As a last resort, ready to use infant formula in a disposable cup should be the alternative.

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness & Response

For more information visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr>

References: 1. 2011 Report: Research Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/breastfeeding/index.html>
2. American Academy of Pediatrics Infant Feeding During a Disaster: <http://www2.aap.org/breastfeeding/files/pdf/infantfeedingDisaster.pdf>
3. La Leche League International: <http://www.llli.org/emergency.html>

USBC (United States Breastfeeding Committee): <http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/emergencies>