



## *Breastfeeding Week in Canada. October 1-7, 2009 Breastfeeding: A Vital Emergency Response. Are You Ready?*

1. A mother with a newborn baby who is being fed formula is stranded during an emergency without clean water, or electricity. She should be encouraged to begin breastfeeding as soon as possible because:
  - a) if the baby is under 1 week old, it will reduce a mother's risk of post partum haemorrhage.
  - b) it will soothe the baby while she heats up formula
  - c) the baby's sucking can cause the production of a significant amount of milk within 24 hours. This is most likely to be successful if the baby is less than four weeks old and/or the mother can still hand-express some drops of milk.
  - d) it may take many hours or days before she and her baby can be rescued to an environment where formula feeding could be made safe. She should not wait until she runs out of useable formula to begin breastfeeding.
  - e) both a) & b)
  - f) both c) & d)
  
2. After the devastating tragedy of the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan China, vulnerable babies were at extreme risk when their mothers were tragically lost. A mother and policewoman contributed to relief efforts by breastfeeding how many babies?
  - a) 3
  - b) 4
  - c) 5
  - d) 8
  
3. The shock of experiencing a disaster or emergency will cause a mother's milk to dry up.  
*True or False?*
  
4. The risk of dehydration from diarrhea due to contaminated water use is more dangerous than that of a mother breastfeeding with a low supply of milk.  
*True or False?*
  
5. When donors send infant formula to agencies or humanitarian organizations for use during disasters or emergencies, this results in:
  - a) stress on facilities who feel compelled to store unsolicited donations and who may be tempted to distribute products before proper plans are made for their safe use.
  - b) an increase in inappropriate supplementation with formula, which disrupts the mothers' milk production.
  - c) perpetuation of myths that mothers' milk is not adequate.
  - d) all of the above.

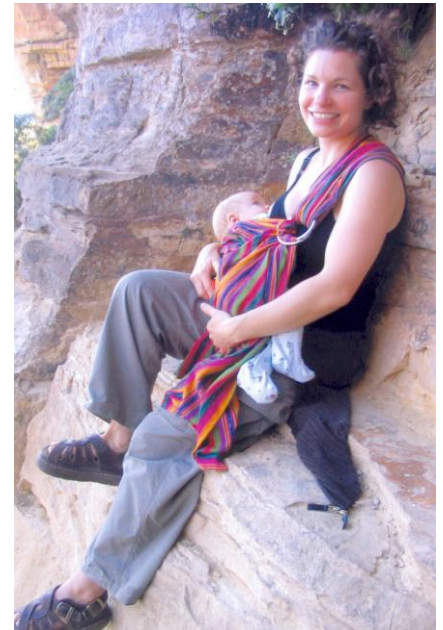


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6. During an emergency, it is appropriate for health facilities to distribute donated infant formula from other countries if all these criteria are met:
  - ~ the label indicates it is well within the best before date
  - ~ it is administered by cup instead of artificial teats
  - ~ it is mixed with flour products to make baked goods

*True or False?*
7. All people can help ensure safe infant and child feeding in emergencies.
 

*True or False?*
8. Mother-to-mother breastfeeding support groups can best help during emergencies by:
  - a) organizing safe places for mothers and infants to gather for support and offering to support other mothers who are having difficulties in an emergency.
  - b) offering to breastfeed the baby of a mother whose milk supply is low
  - c) speaking out to media about the risks of using formula

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### Answers

- 1) (f) A mother trying to relactate and who breastfeeds frequently will find her supply can increase approx 1 oz per day. Some milk is likely to be produced even if the baby is older than 4 weeks. Breastfeeding will comfort the baby and help to relax the mother during this stressful time and also keep the baby warm. Heating formula is not vital and sterilising bottles and teats would be impossible for this stranded mother. Breastfeeding's effect to decrease postpartum haemorrhage occurs in the first 4 hours after birth.
- 2) (d) 5 of the babies were orphans and others were separated from their injured mothers temporarily.
- 3) False. Stress does not prevent production of milk. It may temporarily interfere with its flow. Breastfeeding mothers have lower stress hormone levels than non –breastfeeding mothers. Keeping mothers and babies together, in a protected area making sure the child keeps suckling is the best way to help milk flow well.
- 4) True . Diarrhea will deplete a baby's body fluids rapidly, which can be fatal. A breastfeeding baby who is getting just 65% of the calories he needs will likely maintain weight and will be adequately hydrated. Even mothers who are only partially breastfeeding should be encouraged to increase the baby's time at breast and avoid using unsafe mixtures of formula.
- 5) (d) In many global disasters, distributing formula packs to mothers without proper assessment caused breastfeeding mothers to use formula even when their babies did not require any, leading to disrupted milk production and widespread increases in sickness and disease.
- 6) False. These are all valid guidelines to lessen harm from the distribution of infant formula but they are not enough. If a baby must be fed formula after a careful needs assessment, it must be ensured that the caregiver can properly handle the products, knows about the risks and will be able to provide enough for the entire time the baby needs it. Regular follow up to assess the baby's health and weight is important. Mothers who receive distributed formula often do not know how to read foreign labels and may also not know the dangers of improper mixing. They may unknowingly cause harm by trying to make the amounts last longer, diluting the formula and /or using bacteria and parasite laden water.

- 7) True. Anyone can encourage a breastfeeding mother to continue breastfeeding during emergencies and provide shelter, a safe space, food or a calm presence. All citizens can help by ensuring that community groups develop sound emergency plans for safe feeding of infants and the critical role of breastfeeding.
- 8) a) Even before emergencies occur, mother-to-mother organizations can prepare for emergencies by discussing ways that they could staff a safe place if large numbers of people are made homeless; they can also make contact with local emergency authorities and community groups and tell them about “Infant feeding in Emergencies (IFE)”. While orphaned surviving babies have been saved by wet nursing in many disasters, the best place for a child to receive mother’s milk is in the arms of the baby’s own mother. If the mother has physical contact with her baby, she can breastfeed. Wet nursing is considered when a baby is orphaned and the need is properly identified.

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