



La Leche League Canada

Because breastfeeding isn't always easy, we're here to help

LLL.CA

Providing support for mothers to start or continue breastfeeding is the best way to ensure the health of babies and young children during emergency and disaster situations. Breastmilk gives babies food, water and antibodies that fight illness. Babies under 6 months should not be given anything except breastmilk. Giving a baby under 6 months water or infant formula, milk powder or solid food in disaster situations can expose them to diarrheal diseases which can be fatal. As families, communities and governments, we can provide this support by ensuring our monetary donations go to aid organizations which are supportive of breastfeeding (see resources for list).

Some people believe that stress and/or lack of access to good food will cause a mother's milk supply to decrease or that she will start making milk of poor quality. This is not true. Frequent breastfeeding will increase or maintain milk supply and a mother's body continues to create good quality breastmilk even when food supplies are limited. Donated powdered baby milk may undermine a mother's confidence in her ability to breastfeed and mixing the powdered formula with potentially unclean water or in less than hygienic environments puts babies' health at risk. Sometimes the breastfeeding mother can drink it herself for added nutrition.

More information on infant feeding in disaster situations can be found in the follow resources:

- From the American Academy of Pediatrics, a two-page flyer [Infant Feeding During a Disaster: Breastfeeding and Other Options](#): This two-page PDF document outlines steps pediatricians can take to support breastfeeding during a disaster. It explains why human milk is the cleanest, safest food for an infant and also lists the disadvantages of formula use during a disaster. The document lists relactation and the use of donor human milk as possible options during emergencies.
- [International Lactation Consultant Association's Position Paper on Infant Feeding in Emergencies](#)
- The [World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action \(WABA\)](#) fact sheet on feeding babies in emergencies. Also available on the web in [Thai](#), [French](#), and [Spanish](#).
- <http://www.enonline.net/resources/> Emergency Nutrition Network
- <http://www.enonline.net/links/> for aid organizations which are supportive of breastfeeding