



WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF BREASTFEEDING?

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from **BREASTFEEDING ABSTRACTS**, February 2000, Volume 19, Number 3, pp. 19-21.

International Definitions

Two newer sets of internationally recognized definitions of various breastfeeding terms predominate today in research and program design. One addresses the maternal/infant parameters that affect so many of the health outcomes and management issues associated with breastfeeding, while the second deals primarily with infant nutritional intake.

IGAB Consortium Definitions

The agreed-upon definitions are:

Exclusive breastfeeding: No other liquid or solid from any other source enters the infant's mouth.

Almost exclusive: Allows occasional tastes of other liquids, traditional foods, vitamins, medicines, etc.

Full breastfeeding: Includes exclusive and almost exclusive.

Full breast-milk feeding (or fully breast-milk fed): The infant receives expressed breast milk in addition to breastfeeding.

Partial: Mixed feeding, designated at high, medium, or low. Methods for classification suggested include percentage of calories from breastfeeding, percentage of feeds that are breastfeeds, etc. Any feeding of expressed breast milk would fall under this category.

Token: Minimal, occasional breastfeeds (for comfort or with less than 10 percent of the nutrition thereby provided.)

WHO Breastfeeding Definitions

The WHO/UNICEF definitions are:

Breastfeeding: The child has received breast milk direct from the breast or expressed.

Exclusive breastfeeding: The infant has received only breast milk from the mother or a wet nurse, or expressed breast milk, and no other liquids or solids with the exception of drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, mineral supplements, or medicines.

Predominant breastfeeding :The infant 's predominant source of nourishment has been breast milk. However, the infant may also have received water and water-based drinks (sweetened and flavored water, teas, infusions, etc.), fruit juice; oral rehydration salts solution (ORS), drop and syrup forms of vitamins, minerals and medicines, and ritual fluids (in limited quantities). With the exception of fruit juice and sugar water, no food-based fluid is allowed under this definition.

Full breastfeeding: Exclusive breastfeeding and predominant breastfeeding together constitute full breastfeeding.

Complementary feeding: The child has received both breast milk and solid or semi-solid food.

Bottle-feeding: The child has received liquid or semi-solid food from a bottle with a nipple/teat.