



**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE**

World Breastfeeding Week 2005

**Breastfeeding and Family Foods:
Loving and healthy feeding of other foods while breastfeeding is continued**

The World Health Organization is pleased to join with the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action and its affiliates in more than 120 countries for World Breastfeeding Week 2005. This year's theme is dedicated to the nutritional needs of infants six months to two years of age and beyond - the period of complementary feeding when children make a gradual transition to eating family foods.

The theme is appropriate as global leaders follow through on their commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Improved infant feeding is essential for achieving MDG 4 on the reduction of child mortality, as it is estimated that optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices could avert 20% of all child deaths.

Recommendations for optimal infant feeding practices are clear: breast milk is the best source of nutrition for the majority of infants in the first six months of life, but from then onwards, children need other foods in addition to breast milk in order to fulfil their nutritional requirements. Unfortunately, the period of complementary feeding is one of particular vulnerability in which the incidence of malnutrition rises sharply in many countries.

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, adopted unanimously by WHO Member States in 2002, specifies actions to improve complementary feeding in the context of a continuum of care. In 2003, WHO published Guiding Principles for Complementary Feeding of the Breastfed Child. New tools are also available for children living in exceptionally difficult circumstances. For example, guiding principles for feeding non-breastfed children after six months of age have been developed responding to the needs of infants born to HIV-positive mothers.

However, guidelines are only useful if they are translated into action. Inadequate knowledge about appropriate foods and feeding practices is often an important determinant of malnutrition, even where adequate food is available. Mothers and children need accurate information and skilled support, by their families, communities and the health care system. Providing sound and culture-specific nutrition counselling to mothers of young children and promoting the widest possible use of nutritious indigenous foods will help ensure that meals are prepared and fed safely.

This year's World Breastfeeding Week will mobilize partners and communities world-wide in support of improved infant and young child feeding. WHO joins the partnership and commits its continued support to making appropriate and safe breastfeeding and complementary feeding a reality for all children.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jongwook Lee', written in a cursive style.

LEE Jong-wook
Director-General