

POSITION STATEMENT

Promoting, Protecting and Supporting Optimal Nutrition in the Early Years

BACKGROUND

Optimal nutrition is essential for the developing infant, child and young person. The following guidelines are supported by ACCYPN:

- Breastfeeding guidelines set out by the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#), [UNICEF](#)
- National Health and Medical Research Council Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia incorporating Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workersⁱ
- Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy
- International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

Breastfeeding is the biological norm for infant and young child feeding and is recognised as the optimal feeding method of infants and young children due to its multiple health benefits for infants, mothers and families^{ii,iii,iv}. Risks associated with NOT breastfeeding include:

- Increased risk of poor neurodevelopment^v,
- Increased risk of gastrointestinal, urinary and respiratory infections^{vi}
- Increased risk of allergic disease^{vii}
- Increased risk of juvenile onset diabetes in children^{viii}
- Increased risk of breast and ovarian cancers in women^{ix}.

Breastfeeding

- enhances psychosocial development for women and infants^x
- provides nutritional, ecological and financial advantages to families^{xi, xii}
- reduces systolic blood pressure at school age and a reduction in obesity and heart disease in later life^{xiii, xiv, xv}.

The WHO Acceptable reasons for medical reasons for use of breast-milk substitutes are supported^{xvi}.

THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S NURSES

BELIEVES THAT:

Nurses should integrate into their practice the following:

Promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding

1. Promotion of a baby friendly environment and ensure parents have access to evidence based information
2. Ongoing professional development related to breastfeeding and lactation
3. Promote and support exclusive breast feeding until six months of age with continued breastfeeding to two years and beyond or until mutually desired between the breastfeeding dyad
4. Ongoing assessment of nutritional status
5. Referral to appropriate health professionals or peer support groups when required
6. Promotion of a balance diet for children and young people respecting cultural diversity in provision of advice in relation to nutrition
7. Adherence to the International Code of the Marketing of breastmilk substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions
8. The support of parents who choose to use breast-milk substitutes for medical reasons

RECOMMENDS THAT NURSES:

1. Have access to National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) *Dietary guidelines for children and adolescents in Australia (incorporating the infant guidelines for health workers) and subsequent revisions*
2. Promote optimal nutrition for infants, children and young people

RESOLVES TO:

1. Continue to provide and promote opportunities for professional education to members and other nurses about breastfeeding, lactation and optimal nutrition for children and young people
2. Inform members of the importance of breastfeeding for the both the well and unwell infant or child
3. Support the implementation of a workplace environment that values breastfeeding by providing opportunity and supporting nurses to continue breastfeeding whilst at work
4. Establish links with organisations that support breastfeeding
5. Promote optimal nutrition for children and young people, in hospital, the home and community

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