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سلطنة عُمان
Sultanate of Oman

Responsive feeding

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What is responsive feeding?

Responsive care involves parents and caregivers providing the emotional support, stimulation, food, and healthcare essential for a child's development. Infants rely entirely on caregivers for nourishment, but as they grow, they develop skills like picking up food and using utensils. Caregiver practices can either support or hinder this progress.

Responsive feeding is a two-way process where the child signals hunger or fullness, and the caregiver recognizes, interprets, and responds appropriately. This interaction fosters trust and creates a predictable feeding routine that extends to broader parenting.

Non-responsive feeding occurs when a caregiver either controls feeding too rigidly or ignores the child's cues, leading to stressful mealtimes and strained relationships. Misinterpreting cues, such as offering food for comfort instead of recognizing other needs, is another form of non-responsive care.

What is breastfeeding?

From birth to 6 months of age, feeding infants nothing but breastmilk guarantees them a food source that is uniquely adapted to their nutrient needs, while also being safe, clean, healthy and accessible, no matter where they live. Putting newborns to the breast within the first hour of life – known as early initiation of breastfeeding – is critical to newborn survival and to establishing breastfeeding over the long term. When breastfeeding is delayed after birth, the consequences can be life-threatening – and the longer newborns are left waiting, the greater their risk of death.

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Things to consider as a caregiver

Newborns

- Learn the cues of hunger and fullness of the baby
- Initiate immediate skin to skin contact with your newborn

Hunger cues

Crying, thumb sucking, rooting (exploring and searching for breasts), alertness, and self-attaching

Fullness cues

Sleeping, slow pace in feeding, releasing nipple, relaxing, and turning head from the breast

Early Weeks to 6 Months

- Initiate immediate exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age
- Utilize baby-led feeding by allowing child to decide when they need and want milk by following the cues.
- Keep child close to be able to recognize early signs of hunger (crying, thumb sucking, rooting etc.)

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6 Months to 12 Months

- Start introducing solid foods and make those moment enjoyable such as mask or puree vegetables or fruits.
- Allow child to try feeding themselves even though the process may be messy
- Ensure that you have enough time to socialize with your child during mealtime
- Anticipate patience as feeding babies can be messy.
- Both parents should be engaged in the feeding process as it is an opportunity for the patient and the bay to bond.

12 months to 24 months

- Support your child in trying different types of foods with different textures
- If your child refuses food, offer “tasting” of different food types at different times of the day
- Always offer healthy food options
- Do not force your child to eat
- Anticipate mealtimes so that child does not get over hungry
- Assist child with eating
- Have your child join the family eating on the dining table with their own plate and have enough time to socialize with them

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