

General Circular letter no:.....02-118/2013

24/07/2013

Ministry of Health,
"Suwasiripaya", 385,
Rev Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero Mawatha,
Colombo 10.

All Deputy Director Generals,
Provincial Directors of Health Services,
Regional Directors of Health Services,
All Heads of Institutions,
All Medical Officers of Health.

National Breastfeeding Week 1st -7th August, 2013

"Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mother"

You have all been working hard to Promote, Protect and Support breastfeeding in Sri Lanka. Current status of breastfeeding in Sri Lanka aptly bears testimony to your untiring efforts towards this activity. To strengthen the existing programme, and to further improve the status of breastfeeding in the country the Ministry of Health has declared the week from 1st – 7th August, 2013 as the National Breastfeeding Week.

The theme for the National Breastfeeding Week 2013 is; **"Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mother"**

The Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health, as the focal point for Promotion, Protection and Support of Breastfeeding is coordinating special activities in view of the breastfeeding week based on the above theme. I request you to conduct awareness programmes/activities for the staff in the MOH areas and Institutions during this week in line with the above theme.

The objectives of the breastfeeding week 2013 are;

1. To draw attention to the importance of support in helping mothers to establish and sustain breastfeeding from the time of birth in the hospitals and later in the community.
2. To inform the health care workers of the highly effective benefits of Breastfeeding Counseling, and unite efforts to expand breastfeeding counseling in the hospital and in the community.
3. To call on all specialist hospitals to establish a Lactation Management Center and for the hospitals which have already established centres to ensure proper functioning of the centers according to the national guideline.

4. To advertise and popularize local community support contacts for breastfeeding mothers, those places where women can go to for help and support after giving birth (Lactation Management Centres, Public Health Midwife, Mother Support Groups etc).
5. To encourage breastfeeding supporters, including the closest family of the breastfeeding mothers, to support mothers and babies.

Every Specialist Hospital providing maternity services and care for newborn infants should:

1. Have a functioning Lactation Management Center according to the specified National Guideline (Ref General Circular Letter No; 02-117/2013).
2. Hospitals with established Lactation Management Centers should ensure that all the services are provided according to the National Guideline (Ref General Circular Letter No; 02-117/2013).

Every Hospital providing maternity services and care for newborn infants should:

3. Ensure that all the staff caring for newborns are trained in 40 hr Breastfeeding Counselling Course and ensure that all health care staff have skills and competencies necessary to implement the National Breastfeeding Policy as stated in the Nutrition Policy, 2010 and the Maternal and Child Health Policy, 2013.
4. Support mothers to initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth – This step now means; for all healthy newborns, skin to skin contact from immediately after delivery until the baby has attached and fed at the breast. Special attention has to be paid to babies born by caesarean section, for low birth weight babies, etc.
5. Practice rooming in and allow mothers and infants to remain together – 24 hours a day – Rooming in allow mothers and their babies to stay together day and night to bond and to establish breastfeeding.
6. Support mothers to establish breastfeeding before discharge from the hospital. Do not discharge any mother and baby unless breastfeeding is established and the mother is confident in breastfeeding.
7. Advise mothers at discharge to inform her Public Health Midwife once she goes home. She should be made aware about the Lactation Management Center facilities in the hospital/or in the area and how she can access such services in case she needs.

Every Medical Officer of Health Area should;

1. Ensure that all health workers are trained in Infant and Young Child Feeding Course and have adequate skills and competencies in breastfeeding.
2. Ensure that all mothers, fathers, family members and community are aware about the necessity to initiate breastfeeding within an hour after birth and not to give any prelacteal feeds unless on the advice of a medical personnel.
3. Educate the mothers, fathers, family members and community about the support required for the mother to exclusively breastfeed for 6 months and to continue breastfeeding with complementary feeding for 2 years or beyond.
4. Advocate all workplaces in the community about the importance of breastfeeding and to support employees to continue breastfeeding while adhering to the maternity benefits.
5. Ensure that none of the institutions, distributors, shops or services violates the Sri Lanka code for the Promotion, Protection and Support of breastfeeding and marketing of designated products.
6. Advise and encourage mothers to introduce locally available nutritious complementary foods immediately, when the infant completes six months of age and continue breastfeeding until the child is 2 years or beyond.
7. Encourages mothers to support each other to practice optimal breastfeeding by forming their own informal support groups on infant feeding in the community.

Hereby you are requested to make all the health staff in your Provinces, Districts, Institutions and MOH areas aware about the above activities to strengthen the breastfeeding programme in the country.


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Dr P. G. Maheepala
Director General Health Services

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Cc:
Director/MCH
Director/HEB
Director/NIHS
Director Nutrition
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Chief Medical Officer of Health – CMC