

EARLY INITIATION OF BREASTFEEDING

Outcome indicator, Cluster indicator, DEVCO indicator

Indicator Phrasing

English: % of children born in the last 24 months who were put to the breast within one hour of birth

French: % d'enfants nés au cours des 24 derniers mois qui ont été mis au sein dans l'heure qui a suivi leur naissance

Portuguese: % de crianças nascidas nos últimos 24 meses que foram amamentadas com leite materno durante a primeira hora após o nascimento

Czech: % dětí narozených během posledních 24 měsíců, které byly přiloženy k prsu během první hodiny po porodu

What is its purpose?

Newborns who are put to breast soon after birth stay warmer, receive a rich source of nutrients from the mother's colostrum, and are more likely to be exclusively breastfed for the first months of their lives. This indicator therefore measures the percentage of babies that followed this recommended practice.

How to Collect and Analyse the Required Data

Collect the following data by conducting individual interviews with mothers of (a [representative sample](#) of) children aged 0 - 23 months:

RECOMMENDED SURVEY QUESTION (Q) AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS (A)

Q1: *How long after birth did you put [baby's name] to the breast?*

A1:

- 1) within one hour of birth
- 2) within _____ hours of birth
- 3) within _____ days of birth
- 4) child was never breastfed
- 5) does not remember

If the respondent has more than one child aged 0 - 23 months, ask this question about all children aged

0 - 23 months.

To **calculate the indicator's value**, divide the number of children aged 0 - 23 months who were put to the breast within one hour of birth by the total number of children aged 0 - 23 months (excluding those who did not remember). Multiply the result by 100 to convert it to a percentage.

Disaggregate by

[Disaggregate](#) the data by gender.

Important Comments

1) According to WHO/UNICEF (see below), early initiation of breastfeeding **does not require that the infant suckled at the breast or that milk was transferred from breast to infant**. It represents the practice of putting the baby to breast within the first hour, which is related to a number of positive outcomes, including reduced mortality and exclusive breastfeeding.

2) This indicator relies on an accurate age assessment. Since people often do not remember the exact dates of their children's birth, the data collectors should **always verify the child's age**. This can be done by reviewing the child's birth certificate, vaccination card or another document; however, since many caregivers do not have such documents (and since they can include mistakes), it is essential that your data collectors are able to **verify the child's age by using local events calendars**. Read FAO's Guidelines (see below) to learn how to prepare local events calendars and how to train data collectors in their correct use.

E-Questionnaire

- [XLS form for electronic data collection - indicator Early Initiation of Breastfeeding](#)

Access Additional Guidance

- FAO (2008) [Guidelines for Estimating the Month and Year of Birth of Young Children](#)

- WHO/UNICEF (2021) [Indicators for Assessing IYCF Practices](#)