

6.

Educate mothers/caregivers on:

- Keeping young infant healthy!
- Prevention of young infant illnesses
- Recognising symptoms in young infants
- How to reduce delays in care-seeking

- Teach mothers/caregivers how to prevent illness in young infant:
 - Always keep the young infant clean and warm
 - Give constant attention to young infants
 - Exclusive breastfeeding and bonding
 - Hand washing before handling young infant
 - Clean, airy, well-lit room
 - Cord care
 - Immunization
 - HIV and Syphilis testing

- Encourage mothers/caregivers to seek medical attention promptly whenever young infant falls sick

Preparedness plan incase young infant falls sick, mother/caregiver should:

- Identify symptoms in sick young infant
- Know the nearest health facility to visit
- Have the contacts of the
 - nearest health facility
 - community health provider
- Have a transport plan in mind
 - Set aside transport money
 - Identify a reliable transport provider
- Immediately let decision maker know when a sick young infant has any of the symptoms in this pamphlet

NB: Images used in this pamphlet have been obtained from open sources

**For queries related to the content contact:
Health Provider at nearest health facility**

Neonatal, Child & Adolescent Health Unit (NCAHU) or Child health focal person at the county



Keeping young infants healthy

What needs to be known about sick young infants aged 0-2 months

Pamphlet for Health Providers

1. Purpose of this pamphlet

This healthcare provider pamphlet

- Provides important facts on:
 - the communities' understanding of young infant illnesses.
- Gives information necessary to:
 - dispel myths and misconceptions about causes of young infant illnesses,
 - educate the community to positively influence care seeking behavior for the sick young infant.



2. Barriers to seeking care for sick young infants may include;

- Community's beliefs, cultural practices,
- Myths and misconceptions
- Poor services in health facilities
- Financial barriers
- Transport to distant health facilities
- Decision making process at home

3. Community's perspectives on causes of young infants illnesses

Some community perspectives, practices, cultural beliefs, myths and misconceptions on causes of young infant illness can be harmful and should be discouraged or dispelled.

Cultural beliefs

- Infants rejecting the allocated names
- Witchcraft or sorcery
- Bad omen
- Bad/ evil eye or
- Statements made about the infant
- Presence of an owl in the homestead

Harmful practices

- Delayed breastfeeding while waiting for naming ceremony (religious or cultural)
- Placing exposed young infant outside the home to prevent them from dying like other siblings
- Use of cultural practices to protect against the evil eye

Myths and misconceptions

- Infants born out of wedlock
- Use of family planning
- Eating foods such as wild fruits
- Overworking during pregnancy
- Mother sleeping outdoors during pregnancy

During pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Poor diet during or after pregnancy
- Consuming oily food during pregnancy
- Delivering at home
- Delaying breastfeeding
- Early weaning (complimentary feeds)
- Mixed feeding
- Failure to observe hygiene when breastfeeding
- Contaminated food eaten by mother transmitted through breastmilk

Wrong perspectives should be corrected

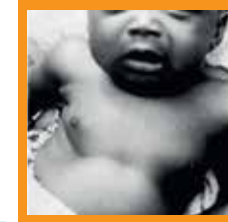
4. The common symptoms that mothers/caregivers identify in sick young infants and take action include:

Common symptoms identified

- excessive crying
- not sleeping well
- sunken eyes
- yellowness of eyes
- change of skin color (yellow)
- restlessness
- inability to pass urine or stool
- vomiting and diarrhea
- eye discharges

Common danger signs identified

- Difficulty in breathing
- Chest indrawing
- High or low body temperature with or without convulsions
- Refusing to breastfeed



Chest indrawing: Lower chest wall goes IN when the infant breathes IN



Yellowness of the skin

Always emphasize these

5. How caregivers make decisions for sick young infants

Actions taken when a sick young infant is identified include:

- Seeking a second opinion from key decision makers
 - Grandmothers (especially mother-in-law)
 - Fathers
 - Neighbours and other close relative
- Care seeking is based on understanding of cause of illness
 - For cultural beliefs, → caregivers go to traditional or faith healers
 - For bewitched/ bad eye, → caregivers go to witchdoctor
 - For medical issues → They buy over the counter medication

Other factors that influence initial action include:

- Geographical access to facilities
- Lack of confidence in the health services
- Poverty

Other decision makers

- Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs)
- Community level providers
- Community health workers/volunteers,

Encourage families to have an emergency plan in place in case the young infant falls sick

This may delay access to health facilities:



Usual transport to distant facilities



Lack of finances