

# Joint comment of multiple pediatric societies on the World Health Organization (WHO) 2023 Guideline on Complementary Feeding

The new WHO guideline aims to provide evidence-based recommendations on complementary feeding (CF) of healthy term infants and young children from all backgrounds, including both breastfed and non-breastfed children. Like WHO, our organisations aim to promote optimal infant and young child nutrition and health, with a focus on promoting breastfeeding (BF) as well as appropriate and timely CF. We welcome and agree with several of the recommendations made by WHO; however, we would like to raise concerns about other aspects. We suggest alternative or modified proposals in a call for all future guidance to follow good scientific practice.

## Source of concerns:

### Developmental process

Lack of stakeholder engagement and public consultation meaning the opportunity for wider input was missed and factual inaccuracies persist.



### Context-specificity

Attempt to make global recommendations with little mention of different contexts and health needs in low-, middle- and high-income countries.



“...the recommendations have the potential to cause confusion and potential unintended harm.”

## WHO Guideline

- 1 “BF should continue up to 2 years or beyond.”
- 2 “For infants (6-11 months) not fed breast milk, milk formula or animal milk can be fed. For young children (12-23 months) not fed breast milk, animal milk (no follow-up formula) should be fed.”
- 3 “Infants should be introduced to CF at 6 months while continuing BF.”

## Our Proposal

- 1 “Decision to BF beyond 2 years is context-dependent and should be left to mother & infant.”
- 2 “Recommendations on animal milk and formula milk should be context-specific and depend on availability, affordability, and nutrition levels.”
- 3 “Introduction to CF must also consider developmental readiness and the appropriate age for introducing allergenic foods (e.g. egg/peanut) in affected populations, which may be introduced in age-appropriate form when CF is commenced any time from 4 months.”

