

EFFIA KWESIMINTSIM MUNICIPAL HEALTH DIRECTORATE.

The Municipal Health Directorate as part of its mandate provides comprehensive nutrition services at both the community and health facility levels with an overall goal of helping reduce under nutrition mostly among women of reproductive age and children under five years to help reduce nutrition related infant and child mortality which is estimated to be the underlying cause of nearly half of all under five child deaths.

In pursuit of this goal, the Health Directorate implements the underlisted key nutrition interventions, among others.

1. **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative:** Research has shown that breast milk is the most suitable diet for infants right from birth till six months of age and beyond. The benefits of breastfeeding are enormous, ranging from protection against later life diabetes to immediate causes (diarrhoea, respiratory tract infection and malnutrition) of infant mortality. In furtherance of the goal of reducing infant and child mortality, the Municipal Health Directorate promotes, protects, and supports Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) beginning with early initiation of breastfeeding within thirty (30) minutes – or at most 1 hour of birth; and continuous support to mothers and their families to practice EBF until the child is six months when complementary foods are introduced. Breastfeeding is promoted and supported together with appropriate complementary feeding until child is two years.
2. **Growth Monitoring and Promotion:** All health facilities across the Municipality organise monthly Child Welfare Clinics (CWC) to assess the growth of children under five years with particular attention on children below two years due to the irreversible consequences of malnutrition after age two years. Growth assessment is done to identify children with growth faltering and targeted nutrition assessment, counselling, and support given to caregivers to help address the immediate causes of under nutrition.
3. **Nutrition Improvement Programme Using Kokoplus:** the Ajinomoto Foundation, a Japanese organisation is partnering the Ghana Health Service with Effia Kwesimintsim Municipality being one of the target districts, to roll-out a nutrition improvement programme where affordable nutrient-dense supplements (kokoplus) are recommended to caregivers for purchase and use in enriching complementary foods. At a cost of fifty Ghana pesewas (Ghc 0.5), caregivers can access this supplement which provides essential micronutrient usually lacking in traditional complementary foods. The Foundation has also pledged that in rare cases where caregivers can not afford to buy this supplement for rehabilitation of an under nourished child, they would support such a household with free supplies of the supplement.
4. **Micronutrient Deficiency Control:** Micronutrients - often gotten from fruits and vegetables, are deficient in the diet of most people – both young and old. Micronutrient deficiency is also called hidden hunger since the victim in most cases is unaware of this deficiency. The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS, 2014) estimates that 48% of adolescent girls are anaemic. In response to this, the Ghana Health Service together with partners – UNICEF, CDC, Ghana Education Service, implements the Girls Iron Folic acid Tablet Supplementation (GIFTS) programme to help address anaemia among in-school and out of school adolescent girls in Ghana. The Ghana Education Service (GES), with technical support from the Ghana Health Service (GHS)

Nutrition unit manages the in-school component whilst the GHS implements the out-of-school component through health facilities in the Municipality.

Iron supplements are also given to pregnant women throughout pregnancy until six weeks postpartum to help increase iron levels and reduce risk of postpartum haemorrhage.

Vitamin A supplements are also given to children under five years through Child Welfare Clinics (CWC), home visits and School health services to help improve body stores, build a strong immune system, improve resilience against diseases and as a result reduce mortality among children.