

# NURTURING CARE PRACTICE GUIDE

Strengthening nurturing  
care through health  
and nutrition services



NURTURING CARE  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

## Opportunities to adapt health and nutrition services for pregnant women and children to be supportive of nurturing care



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<https://nurturing-care.org/practiceguide/>

# Ensuring all children survive and thrive



What the child's brain and body expects and needs

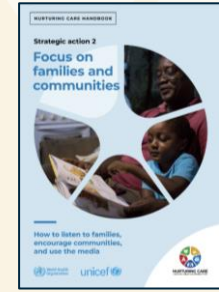


Enabling environments for nurturing care

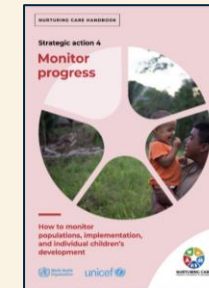
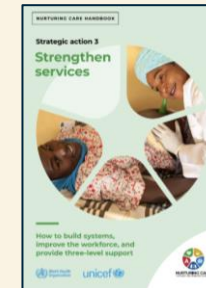


# Operationalizing the Nurturing Care Framework

## The five strategic actions



## Nurturing care handbook





STRENGTHEN  
SERVICES

# The role of health and nutrition services in strengthening nurturing care

- Parents and other caregivers are primarily responsible for their children's care and support
- All caregivers require some support to provide nurturing care
- Some caregivers might have limited or disrupted capacity
- First time/adolescent mothers and fathers, conflict within the household, poverty

Well-baby clinic

Postnatal consultation

Maternity care

Antenatal consultation



Neonatal intensive care

Paediatric inpatient care

Sick child consultation

Care for chronic illness

Nutrition rehabilitation

Waiting rooms

Mother groups, community based services, home visits

## Opportunity

Caregivers and children have regular interaction with providers of health and nutrition services, from pregnancy through early childhood

# Strengthening nurturing care through health and nutrition services



**GOOD  
HEALTH**



**ADEQUATE  
NUTRITION**



**RESPONSIVE  
CAREGIVING**



**OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
EARLY LEARNING**



**SAFETY AND  
SECURITY**

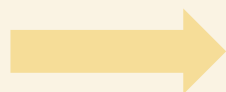


**CAREGIVER  
WELL-BEING**

Health and nutrition services already support caregivers with two of the five components of nurturing care.

How can health and nutrition services better support caregivers with the other three components of nurturing care?  
How can health and nutrition services support caregiver well-being?

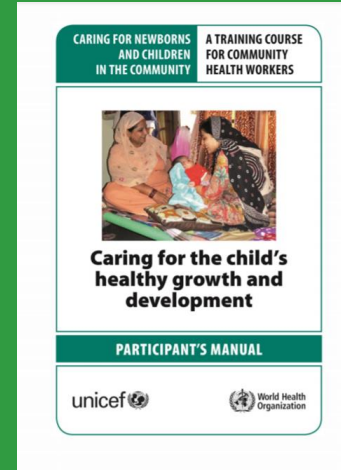
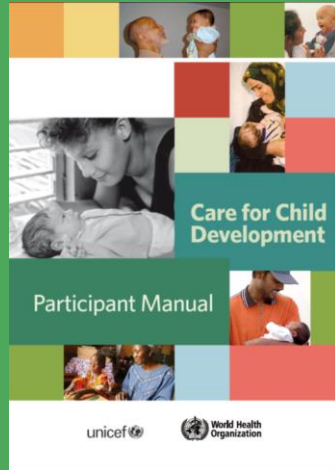
**Strengthen**



**Add**

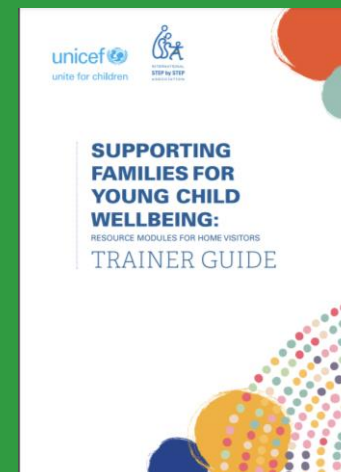
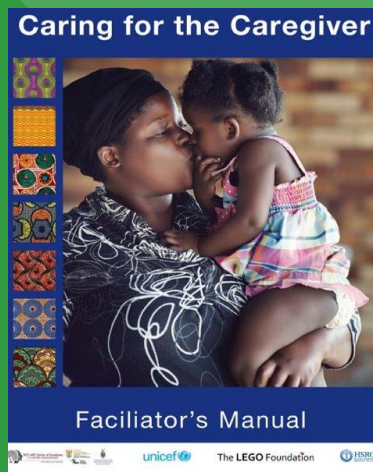
# Tools that address one or more components

<https://nurturing-care.org/tag/training-materials>



## And so much more!

- Reach up and Learn
- Parenting for lifelong health – tip sheets,
- Videos



**NURTURING CARE**  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

# Nurturing care practice guide

- Targets **providers and managers** of health and nutrition services
- Focuses on **three of five** inter-related components of nurturing care, as well as on caregiver well-being
- Introduces considerations to **serve all children and their caregivers**, including those with chronic illness, developmental delays and disabilities
- Is relevant for **humanitarian and emergency** settings

<https://nurturing-care.org/practiceguide/>

## NURTURING CARE PRACTICE GUIDE

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and nutrition services



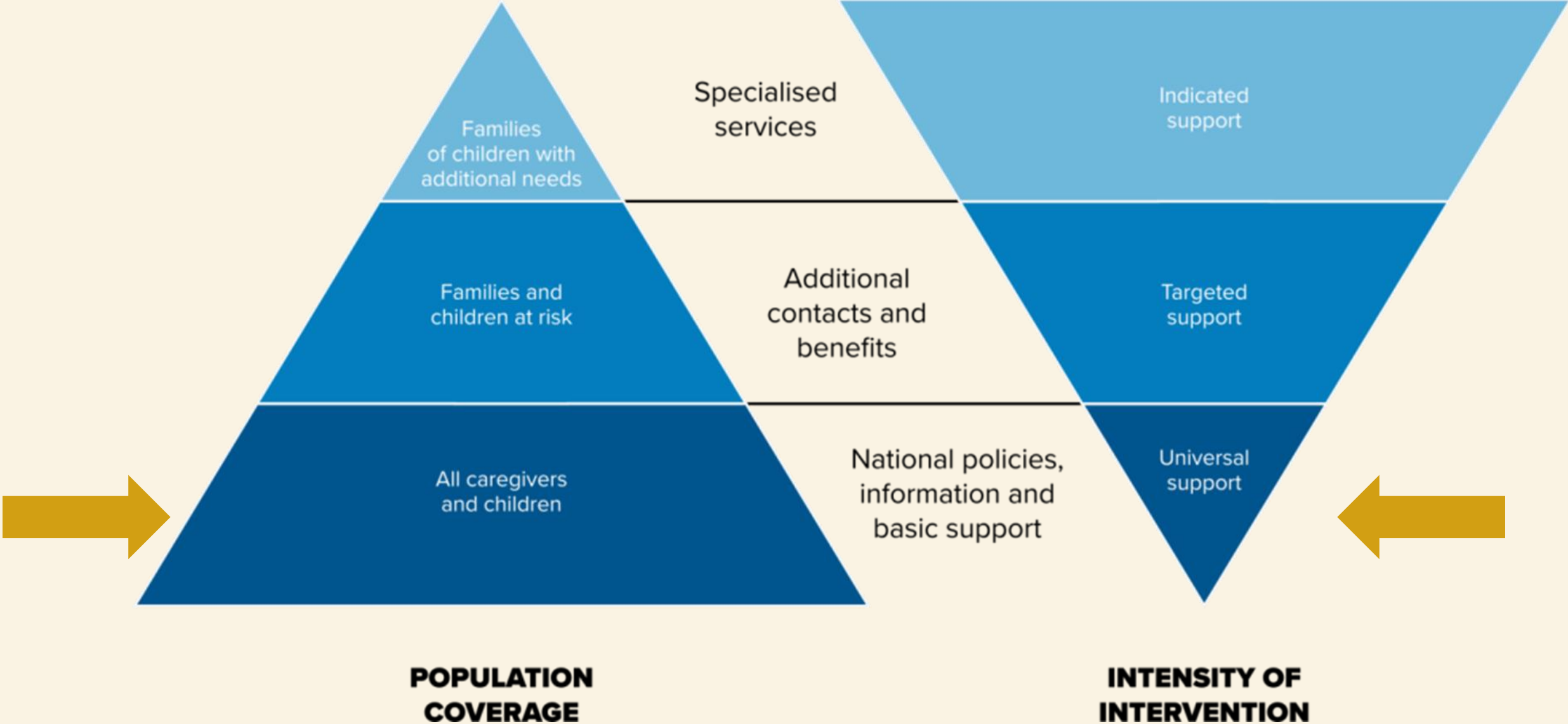
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Organization



NURTURING CARE  
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# Focuses on universal support







# Nurturing care practice guide

## Part 1

### **Nurturing care: another look**

Rationale for strengthening support for responsive caregiving, opportunities for early learning, safety and security, and caregiver well-being in health and nutrition services

## Part 2

### **Preparing health and nutrition services**

Role of managers to reduce barriers, build skills of providers, identify resources for additional support

## Part 3

### **Supporting families in existing services**

Practical examples of what providers can do in existing services throughout the lifecourse



# 1

## Nurturing care: another look



Photo credit: © UNICEF/UN0156444/Voronin

# RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING



Refers to the ability of the caregiver to notice, understand, and respond to their child's signals in a timely and appropriate manner. Considered the foundational component because responsive caregivers are better able to support the other four components.



Photo credit:  
Aga Khan Development Network/J-L. Ray

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY LEARNING



Refers to any opportunity for the infant or child to interact with a person, place, or object in their environment. Recognizes that every interaction (positive or negative) or absence of an interaction is contributing to the child's brain development and laying the foundation for later learning.



Photo credit:  
Flickr Creative Commons License/IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation

# SAFETY AND SECURITY



Refers to safe and secure environments for children and their families. Includes physical dangers, emotional stress, environmental risks (e.g., pollution), and access to food and water.



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# CAREGIVER WELL-BEING



Refers to caregivers' physical and mental health. Recognizes that caregivers are best placed to provide their children nurturing care but can only do so effectively when they are able to care for themselves and get support when problems arise.



Photo credit:  
Plan Ecuador

# Caregiver capacities

Throughout their regular interactions with caregivers, **providers can**

- Observe
- Ask and discuss
- Introduce and model
- Acknowledge and encourage positive caregiver practices
- Problem-solve

**And support caregivers**

- To be more responsive
- To recognize opportunities to help their children learn
- To provide a safe and protective environment
- To be well

Table 1.1. Examples of caregiver practices related to nurturing care and provider support for caregivers

COMPONENT OF NURTURING CARE	CAREGIVER PRACTICES
<b>Responsive caregiving</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spend one-to-one time with your full attention on the child.</li><li>• Look closely at the child.</li><li>• Be aware of the child's signals (for example, hunger, discomfort, attempts to communicate, joy and need for affection).</li><li>• Respond appropriately and in a timely way to the child's signals and needs. These will differ when the child is well, sick or has special needs.</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities for early learning</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk with your child.</li><li>• Play with your child.</li><li>• Engage your child during your household routines and tasks.</li><li>• Follow your child's lead, and assist the child's interest in exploring and learning.</li></ul>
<b>Safety and security</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build your child's trust through a warm, responsive presence.</li><li>• Make a safe home environment for exploration and increasing independence.</li><li>• Protect your child from harsh discipline, neglect and abuse.</li><li>• Apply positive discipline methods.</li><li>• Establish routines for eating and sleeping.</li><li>• Protect the child from harmful substances.</li></ul>
<b>SUPPORTING CAREGIVER WELL-BEING</b>	
<b>Supporting caregiver well-being</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify your feelings about having a baby – joys and concerns.</li><li>• Discuss your concerns and the help needed from your family.</li><li>• Maintain daily relaxing routines.</li><li>• Build the capacity to care for yourself.</li><li>• Know where to find help to problem-solve and organize support.</li><li>• Identify community services, support networks.</li></ul>

# 2

What can  
managers do?



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# Enabling health and nutrition services to support nurturing care: what can managers do?

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1. Make facilities accessible and welcoming for all children
2. Adapt to humanitarian and health crises
3. Identify needs and advocate for specialized services

## BOX 3. CHECKLIST TO CREATE INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING HEALTH FACILITIES

- Is the facility designed to allow easy access? Check for wheelchair ramps; whether services for children are located on the ground floor; and visual cues.
- Are all places within the facility that are accessible to children safe and secure? Check for cleanliness, fencing, placement of security personnel, and registers for check-in and check-out to support child safety.
- Are there child-friendly toilets and handwashing facilities? Check for access, cleanliness, height, placement and design.
- Are child-sized chairs and tables, or floor mats and other basic amenities, available and in good working order?
- Are there child-friendly spaces (indoors or outdoors) that are enclosed and designated as play areas?
- In any part of the facility where children receive services, are there brightly-coloured painted walls and surface materials?
- Are child-friendly play materials (e.g. toys, books and household items) available in the facility?
- Is a trained volunteer or community health worker currently involved in play activities with children and their caregivers, or servicing a play corner with age-appropriate and inclusive play items?
- Do areas where children receive services have appropriate job aids for providers and messages for families visibly displayed? Check for flipcharts, child development posters, handbooks, manuals, handouts or leaflets to inform families.

Source: adapted from (26).

# 2 Enabling health and nutrition services to support nurturing care: what can managers do?

## 4. Build the capacity of service providers

- Interpersonal communication skills
- Skills to support caregiver practices

## 5. Strengthen services to support caregiving

- Integrated management protocols
- Supervisory checklists, mentoring support

Table 2.1. Skills providers need to strengthen caregiver practices for nurturing care

### SKILLS FOR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

#### For all caregiver-provider contacts

- Ask open-ended questions, listen attentively and observe interactions and practices.
- Praise and reinforce the efforts of families to care for their children.
- Identify family difficulties in providing care at home or using health services.
- Empathize with caregiver concerns and assist caregivers in solving problems through shared decision-making.
- Coach or guide caregivers in practising new skills, identify difficulties they might have and help solve problems.

### SKILLS TO SUPPORT CAREGIVER PRACTICES



#### For responsive caregiving

- Observe cues as children interact with caregivers (e.g. expressions of hunger, discomfort, fear, needs for affection and interests).
- Observe the responses of caregivers to their children's cues.
- Engage caregivers in practising responsive interactions, starting before the child is born and continuing through the early years.
- Emphasize the importance of responsive caregiving to support children who are acutely ill or have chronic conditions, and help caregivers interpret and respond to their cues.
- Demonstrate responsiveness when asking about caregiver concerns.
- Model responsiveness with the child during the visit while weighing, immunizing or taking the child's temperature. Actively engage, explain and respond to the child's cues of fear and curiosity, and encourage the caregiver's help.



#### For opportunities for early learning

- Identify existing and missed opportunities for caregivers to play and communicate with their young children at home.
- Counsel caregivers on how to start very early, even during pregnancy, to play and communicate with their young children.
- Identify developmentally-appropriate learning activities and use them to strengthen caregiver-child interactions.
- Model ways to praise and encourage caregivers in what they are doing well, and in trying out new tasks with their children.



#### For safety and security

- Help caregivers identify and correct environmental hazards to the child's health and development in the home and in the community.
- Observe for signs of potential neglect and abuse of children and their caregivers, and follow reporting protocols when necessary.
- Help caregivers stop unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, alcohol or other substance abuse.
- Help caregivers establish routines for eating and sleeping.

### SKILLS TO SUPPORT CAREGIVER WELL-BEING



#### For supporting caregiver well-being

- Listen to the caregiver(s) and build a trusting confidante relationship.
- Work together to understand how caregivers feel about their children and identify stressors the caregiver is facing.
- Demonstrate relaxation exercises and other practices that can help caregivers cope with stress.
- Support caregivers in problem-solving and develop approaches for dealing with family conflict.
- Connect caregivers to peer groups and other community resources to support their own well-being and that of their children.

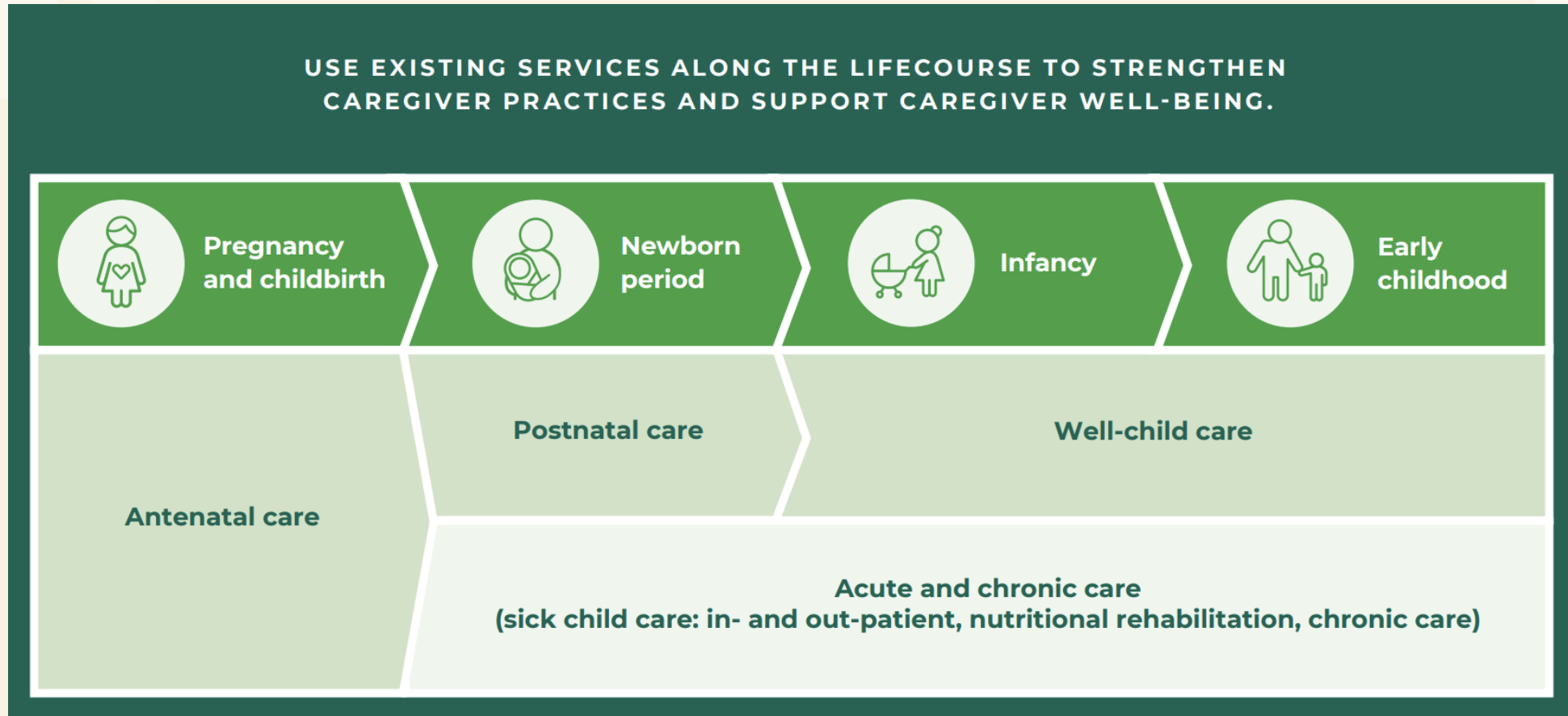
# 3

What can practitioners do?



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# Services where providers can support caregivers to provide nurturing care and support caregiver well-being



# Example: sick child services – outpatient care

## 3.4. Sick-child care and follow-up: managing childhood illness responsively

When a child is sick, managing the child's illness is the priority for service providers. It is also the priority for caregivers, and they need skills to do it well. Caregivers need to notice how the child feels, recognize signs of illness, and respond quickly when the child requires medical attention. Being responsive enables the caregiver to seek timely medical care, give a child medicine, and comfort the child in pain and discomfort. However, time is limited to help families improve their caregiving practices when the child is sick. Strengthening caregiver practices must be accomplished within the priority of learning how to care for the sick child.

### Managing the sick child: treating the child in the outpatient clinic and preparing for home care

A sick child seen in a clinic who is not referred to hospital may need a caregiver at home to give effective treatment, provide responsive and supportive care and nurture the child to health. For example, caregivers should learn how to prepare and feed a child who refuses to eat. They need to know how to give the child medicine, and to troubleshoot

common problems if the child spits it out. The WHO and UNICEF *Integrated management of childhood illness protocols (46)* for managing the sick child in a first-level health facility and in the community stress that the caregiver needs to practise preparing and giving medication correctly. This is an opportunity to help the caregiver learn how to be aware of and respond to the difficulties the child may have.

Children with cognitive, physical or behavioural difficulties may have particular complications with eating and receiving the medical care they need. They may be lethargic, withdraw and reject physical touch. The provider can demonstrate to a caregiver how to draw the child's interest, activate swallowing and prevent choking and other problems.

In a follow-up visit, if the child has improved, there is more time to strengthen other caregiver practices. Some practices, including responsive play, can help the child catch up if there has been a delay of growth and development during the illness.

Caregivers may face additional challenges and stress to care for a sick child while having to manage work, household chores and take care of other children. They might require support.

**Table 3.4.1** gives suggestions for what providers can do to strengthen caregiver practices and support caregiver well-being during outpatient sick-child visits.

Table 3.4.1. Supporting caregivers during outpatient sick-child care


COMPONENT OF NURTURING CARE	CAREGIVER PRACTICES	EXAMPLES OF WHAT SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN DO
 <p><b>Responsive caregiving</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Look closely at your child.</li> <li>□ Be aware of the child's signals (e.g. hunger, discomfort, attempts to communicate, joy and attention).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> How did you know your child was sick? How is your child acting differently today? You did well to notice that your child was sick and to bring your child to see me. Let's see what we can do together to help your child get better.</li> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Your child needs to eat well, even when he is sick. What difficulties are you having? What can you prepare that he might be interested in? You might need to offer food more often, in smaller bits. Follow his signals that he is ready to take another bite. Give advice on how to ensure a sick child continues to drink and eat.</li> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Continue frequent feeding when the child gets better so he will catch up his growth. Follow his signals that show you he is ready to eat. How does your child signal to you he is ready to eat?</li> <li>□ <b>Observe</b> a breastfeed to see if the child is feeding well (as recommended in <i>Integrated management of newborn and childhood illness</i>). If needed, assist the mother to position the child well for effective feeding. Encourage the mother to look closely, gently touch and talk softly to the child, and respond to the child's attempts to reach and touch her.</li> </ul>

Table 3.4.1. Continued

COMPONENT OF NURTURING CARE	CAREGIVER PRACTICES	EXAMPLES OF WHAT SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN DO
 <p><b>Responsive caregiving</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Respond appropriately and in a timely way to the signals and the child's needs, which differ when the child is well or sick, or has special needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Demonstrate</b> Responsively engage and talk to the child as you approach to examine or treat her, e.g. when you give the child an injection. Explain what you are doing. Encourage the caregiver to assist in engaging the child in a similar way.</li> <li>□ <b>Counsel</b> Coach the caregiver to practise some of the tasks for home care: take the child's temperature or feel for fever, identify fast breathing or other signs of severe illness, and give the child the first dose of medicine if required.</li> <li>□ <b>Observe</b> If the child is fussing, observe how the caregiver calms the child. How do you calm your child?</li> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Your child will find it easier to calm down if you are calm also. Take a few deep breaths. Then, try holding your child close to you with your hand, still and firmly, on your child's back until your child is calm.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Opportunities for early learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Talk with your child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Demonstrate</b> Talk to the child softly, explaining as you go through the steps of the visit. Engage the child, rather than force the child's response. For example, hold your hand out and ask the child to give you her hand. Tell the child that you will take her temperature.</li> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Even though the child is sick, he will learn if you talk to him about what is around you, what he is doing, or try to articulate how he might be feeling.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Safety and security</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Make a safe environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> How do you store your medicines at home? Discuss how to keep medicines dry and safe, and away from children.</li> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Who will care for the sick child if you are unable to? Identify an adult who will stay with your child.</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORTING CAREGIVER WELL-BEING</b>		<b>EXAMPLES OF WHAT SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN DO</b>
 <p><b>Supporting caregiver well-being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Build caregivers' capacity to care for themselves.</li> <li>□ Problem-solve and organize support from family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Discuss</b> Caring for a child who is sick can be difficult and tiring. What can you do to relax, even for 10 minutes at a time?</li> <li>□ <b>Ask</b> What extra help do you need from your family, so you can spend more time with your child and care for yourself? Who could you ask for help?</li> <li>□ <b>Ask</b> What difficulty might you have in returning for a follow-up visit?</li> </ul>

# THREE ways to view the nurturing care practice guide

1. Download the entire guide
2. Download by section
3. Download by service

## Three annexes (available as individual files)

1. Additional reading on nurturing care
2. Training resources to develop the skills of providers
3. Strengthening nurturing care to support caregiver well-being across the three levels of support

## Three tables (available as individual files)

1. Caregiver practices
2. Providers' skills
3. What managers can do

### 1. Nurturing Care: Another Look



This section describes why nurturing care is important for children's health and development. It focuses on the importance of strengthening caregivers' capacity to provide nurturing care across all five components, highlighting the three components that are commonly less well supported through maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition services – responsive caregiving, opportunities for early learning, and safety and security. It also emphasizes the need to support caregivers to care for their children and maintain their own well-being.

Download

### 2. Enabling Health and Nutrition Services to Support Nurturing Care: What Can Managers Do?



This section identifies what managers can do to reduce barriers and expand services to support nurturing care, build the skills of providers, and identify resources for more intensive support for young children with special needs. Concluding this section is a checklist of specific changes for managers to consider.

Download

### 3. Supporting Families Through Existing Services: What Can Service Providers Do?



This section provides practical examples of what providers can do during their contacts with caregivers and children to better support caregivers, hear and address their concerns, and strengthen caregivers' practices to care for their children. Suggestions are provided for antenatal care, postnatal care, out-patient well-child and sick-child care, inpatient paediatric care, and nutritional rehabilitation and support services.

Download

<https://nurturing-care.org/practiceguide/>

# What's next?

## ways to use this guide

- **Convene at country level to review**
  - What is already happening – where can you complement
  - What are new ideas?
  - Consider phased approach
    - What are 'low hanging fruit'
    - Start with certain services, document, learn and scale
- **Institutionalize skills building**
  - Are any of the foundational training packages used?
  - Pre- and in-service training
  - Incorporate in mentoring and supervision
- **Disseminate the guide/sections of the guide**
  - Facility managers
  - Providers (part 3 sections)
- **Document, inform scale up and cross-country learning**



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## Not everything has to be done all at once



Thank you

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