

The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes

FACTSHEET
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The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes is a recommendation that was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 and reaffirmed by all WHO member states in 2002. The Code seeks to promote and protect breastfeeding and to control marketing practices used to sell products for artificial feeding.

In view of the risks involved in artificial feeding the marketing of breast milk substitutes needs regulation. Manufacturers and distributors of infant formulae have an important role in relation to infant feeding to ensure the sale of their products does not undermine breastfeeding.

Any substance which takes the place of breastmilk can be considered a breastmilk substitute. This includes all infant formula, follow-on formula, bottles teats and baby foods.



What the Code means

- No advertising of breastmilk substitutes to the public.
- No free samples of breastmilk substitutes to mothers.
- No promotion of products in health care facilities or pharmacies.
- No direct access to the public by company representatives.
- Information to health personnel should be scientific and factual.
- Unsuitable products, such as pureed sweet foods, should not be promoted for babies.

How you as a health professional help to implement the Code

1. Promote breastfeeding in your health care facility or pharmacy.
2. Provide mothers with contact details of local breastfeeding support groups.
3. Refer mothers with breastfeeding problems to their public health nurse, general practitioner or a lactation consultant.

4. Monitor marketing practices according to the principles and aim of the Code. Any breach of recommended marketing practices should be reported to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Such breaches might involve direct marketing of breast milk substitutes in public literature such as women's magazines. As a health professional you may be inadvertently advertising to the public by using materials or displaying posters which display a formula company logo.
5. Ensure your conduct at every level conforms to the Code, the relevant World Health Assembly resolutions and the national legislation that has been adopted to give effect to both.

References

1. Protecting infant health. A health worker's guide to the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. June 1993
2. Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Recommendations for a national infant feeding policy. 1999
3. Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WHO/UNICEF 2003