

# Mothers

Monitoring Trends – an IBFAN summary • 2001

## Making informed choices about infant feeding

Companies should conform to the Code **at every level**, whether or not governments have taken any action (Art. 11.3 of the Code).

### The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes states that there should be:

- No advertising or other forms of promotion of breastmilk substitutes to the public
- No free samples or gifts that may promote bottle feeding to mothers
- No contact between marketing personnel and pregnant women and mothers
- Specified details and warnings in educational and information materials and these should not contain pictures or text that idealise the use of breastmilk substitutes

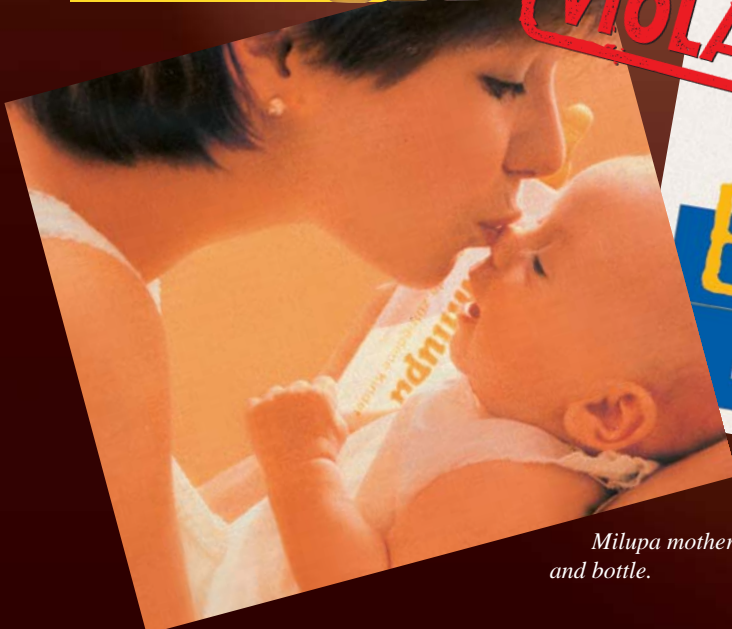


Wyeth Baby Club  
Hong Kong.



**VIOLATION**

Similac  
Welcome  
Addition  
Club



Milupa mother, baby . . .  
and bottle.

Everything's Ready, But Me!

OUR DOCTORS DISCUSS WHAT TO  
EXPECT FROM BABY'S ARRIVAL...INSIDE!



**VIOLATION**



## PRIME TARGETS

Mothers are the ultimate targets of baby food company promotion. Companies aim to undermine mothers' confidence in their ability to breastfeed and at the same time build trust in the companies' range of products.

The Code is intended to protect mothers from commercial influence so as to enable them to make informed decisions about infant feeding. Concerned more with "healthy profits" than healthy babies, baby food companies pay lip service to the importance of breastfeeding and try to find new ways around Code restrictions.

*In the USA, Abbott-Ross offers pregnant women their babies' first toy – a Rosco Teddy Bear – when they fill in a survey for Welcome Addition Club. Mothers also receive a carton containing gifts and products for their babies "to grow on" should they decide not to breastfeed.*

*Wyeth baby club members in Taiwan receive samples of S-26 formula, S-26 gift bags and gifts ranging from bibs to bottles and towels to toys.*



*Gerber free sample attached to magazine in Malaysia.*

- Gerber complementary foods are advertised in newspapers and magazines in several countries for use below six months of age.
- In magazines that are donated to hospital waiting rooms in Taiwan, the products are also promoted for use in a bottle
- In Egypt and Malaysia consumers are invited to send their names and addresses to receive free samples or a feeding bowl and spoon.



## BABY CLUBS

One common strategy used by most companies nowadays is to establish Baby Clubs and Mothers' Clubs, which gives them an excuse to get into direct contact with mothers. Building a mailing list is the main purpose for these clubs.

Mothers (or mothers-to-be) submit their addresses, babies' names and birth dates through the Internet or on leaflets distributed in shops or by health workers. Soon they receive gift packs containing free samples, discount coupons, feeding bottles or other gifts along with a club magazine offering infant feeding advice and promoting company products.

Mead Johnson approaches Malaysian mothers even before their babies are born. Shelf talkers in shops invite them to join its MaMa Club to receive a free subscription of the Mead Johnson MaMa Club newsletter "Mama to Mama". Mothers just need to submit tin foils from the lids of any Mead Johnson product, including infant formula, to become members.

In Singapore, Nestlé's Blue Bear invites mothers-to-be into the Nestlé Baby World to "prepare for motherhood". Club members receive newsletters containing "tips on nutrition, baby care, weaning and more" and a booklet about pregnancy and the unborn baby's development.

Nestlé denies that Nestlé Baby World violates the Code. The company claims that the Club provides mothers with information on nutrition and care of "babies at weaning age and toddlers" and that cereal products fall outside the scope of the Singapore Code. So why then does Nestlé address pregnant women?



**PROMOTIONAL TACTICS**

Advertising and other forms of product promotion are banned under the Code in all countries. Yet, many companies in North America and Europe advertise their formulas as though the Code does not apply there. There are ads on TV, direct mailings of promotional materials, gifts, coupons, free samples, and the Internet. Billboards, magazines, newspapers and company promotional materials show the disregard of bottle and teat companies for the Code's advertising ban.

Mothers are also exposed to much of the promotion ostensibly directed at health workers, for example clocks, posters, calendars, pens and prescription pads typically carrying the company name and/or brand name. These are visible to patients in doctors' offices, hospital waiting areas or examination rooms.

Sales promotion in shops include posters, special displays, discounts, shelf talkers, gift offers, tied sales and free samples. In some countries, company reps are stationed in supermarkets or visit health centres. Here, they distribute promotional materials and free product samples directly to mothers or advise them on infant feeding and care and recommend specific company products.



Bottles and teats for a "healthier start in life" – Japlo in Malaysia.



Mothers in Canada are able to earn air miles with the purchase of Abbott-Ross products.

Special discount in Hong Kong.

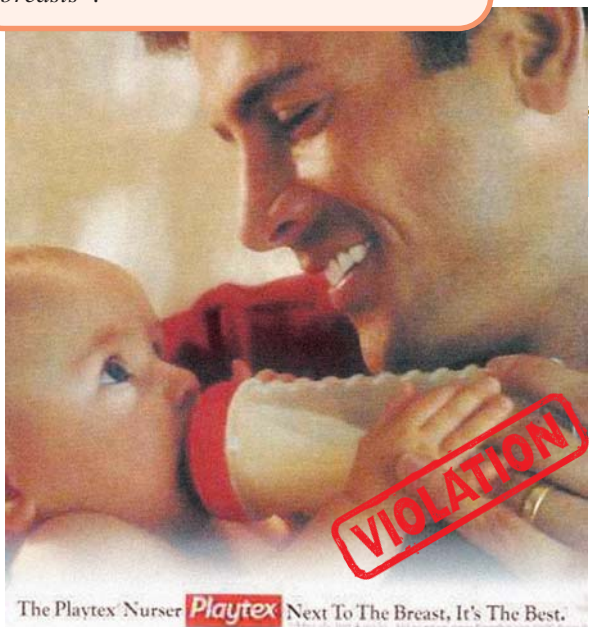


Playtex advertises in magazines in Canada, Hong Kong, the UAE, Uruguay and the USA, making comparisons between its products and mother's breast and suggesting that the company understands babies' needs better than their mothers.

In the UAE, Cannon claims its Avent silicone teats are "just like mother's breasts".



Misleading Nestlé ad in West Africa.



Mead Johnson, Wyeth and Friesland advertise their follow-up formulas on TV in Hong Kong.

Mead Johnson materials in Hong Kong instruct mothers planning to breastfeed to go through complicated and time-consuming procedures which are discouraging, such as scrubbing their nipples and breasts with soap.

**MISLEADING INFORMATION**

Information and educational materials must contain specified details and warnings. No images or text that idealise the use of breastmilk substitutes are allowed. Companies often present inaccurate and biased information that tends to discourage breastfeeding alongside photos of their products.





## COMPLEMENTARY FOODS

Many companies pretend that complementary foods such as cereals are not included in the scope of the Code. The Code applies, however, to all products marketed or represented as replacements for breastmilk. Subsequent Resolutions, supported by scientific evidence and numerous experts on infant nutrition, have recommended that complementary feeding begin at six months of age. This means that the promotion and labelling of any cereal, jarred food, juice, tea or other product marketed for use before six months is prohibited. Follow-up milks are breastmilk substitutes and are covered by the Code.



Bledina leaflets show photos of infants and indicate that products can be used as of three months of age.



Blue Bear products are as "natural as your love".



In Russia Hipp promotes Baby Tea from the first week.



Heinz promotes its jarred foods from four months.



In 2000, the manufacturer of Annum, the New Zealand Dairy Board, offered to sponsor World Breastfeeding Week in a Malaysian hospital and said it does not market products under the Code. A few months later, its follow-on milk was found in neighbouring Singapore.

### Expanding markets

Companies are expanding their infant feeding product lines and promotion strategies to entice mothers earlier, with Mothers Clubs and formulas for mothers-to-be and to keep them enticed longer with follow-up formulas, baby foods and growing-up milks. An example of this is the New Zealand Dairy Board with its **Annum 1** milk for pregnant women. This was followed by **Annum 2** for breast-feeding mothers, **Annum Follow-on** for babies 6-24 months of age, and **Essential** for toddlers.

This pamphlet forms part of a series of 5 IBFAN pamphlets which report on marketing trends. The benchmark standards are the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions. The information is based on independent monitoring carried out by IBFAN groups around the world in 2000. The full report containing evidence of Code violations by companies is available in a 72-page IBFAN publication *Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules, 2001*. The report is available to non-profit groups at US\$ 6 and US\$ 15 to profit groups. A set of pamphlets costs US\$ 5. Prices are inclusive of postage.



For details, contact:  
**IBFAN/ICDC Penang**  
 P.O. Box 19, 10700 Penang, Malaysia  
 Tel: +60-4-890 5799 Fax: +60-4-890 7291 E-mail: [ibfanpg@tm.net.my](mailto:ibfanpg@tm.net.my)