



The International Baby Food Action Network

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"Improving the health and well-being of babies and young children, their mothers and their families..."



The International Code

A brief guide to spotting a violation

What is covered?

The **International Code** applies to breastmilk substitutes, bottle-fed complementary foods and bottles and teats. Infant formula is very clearly covered.

The classification of baby milks known as "**follow-on**" or "**follow-up**" formulas was invented by the baby food industry after the introduction of the Code. (In 1986 the World Health Assembly adopted [Resolution WHA39.28](#) saying these milks are "not necessary".) Companies argue that follow-on formulas are not breastmilk substitutes, but complementary foods and claim they are not covered. However, bottle-fed complementary foods are explicitly listed as within the scope of the Code. In addition, the World Health Organisation recommends breastfeeding into the second year of life and follow-on formulas replace this milk and so can be viewed as breastmilk substitutes.

"**Complementary foods**" more properly refers to cows milk, fruit juices, cereals, vegetables, or any other fluid, solid or semi-solid given in addition to breastmilk (or artificial milk). These are also commonly called weaning foods. Complementary foods come within the scope of the Code if they replace that part of a babies diet best fulfilled by breastmilk. In 1996 the World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA49.15 saying that all complementary foods should not be marketed in a way that undermines exclusive and sustained breastfeeding.

BANNED

For products within its scope the *International Code* **bans**:

Advertising

Free samples (unless for the purpose of professional evaluation or research)

Contact between **company** representatives and **pregnant women** or **mothers** of infants and young children

Promotion through health care facilities (e.g. no posters, no brand names on pens or writing pads, no leaflets for mothers)

Gifts to health workers or mothers

Labels which have **pictures of babies** or **pictures or text** which **idealise** the use of infant formula

Free supplies

Free supplies of products covered by the Code are banned by [Resolution WHA 47.5](#) "in any part of the health care system".

What is promotion?

IBFAN is not campaigning for a ban of artificial infant foods. It is campaigning for appropriate marketing. In other words, companies may manufacture and distribute these products and make health professionals aware of them by providing scientific and factual information. The products are then available to those who need them.

Promotion, however, is banned by the International Code. IBFAN campaigns to see this ban observed. Companies should not promote the use of the products to mothers, health workers or anyone else in any way, be it through advertising, direct mail, leaflets and pamphlets, posters, product samples, free gifts, video shows, lectures or sponsorship of events. Promotion is about persuasion.

REQUIRED

And the Code **requires** that:

Labels are in the **appropriate language** for the country and contain stipulated **warnings** and messages stipulated warnings and messages appear in **educational materials** relating to infant feeding whether written, audio or visual
information given to health professionals is limited to matters that are **factual** and **scientific**

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