

## WHAT IS THE CODE?

The World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (Code) in 1981 to protect infants and young children from inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles, and teats. It was meant to encourage breastfeeding and ensure young children received adequate complementary feeding. Since the Code, the WHA has adopted more than 16 relevant resolutions. The 2016 WHA resolution welcomed the *Guidance on Ending the Inappropriate Promotion of Foods for Infants and Young Children* (Guidance). Adherence to the Code and relevant WHA resolutions is key to achieving optimal infant and young child feeding practices around the world.

## WHAT PRODUCTS ARE COVERED BY THE CODE?

The Code applies to the marketing of all products that function as breastmilk substitutes, which include any milk marketed for feeding infants and young children up to three years of age (including follow-up formula and growing-up milks), any other product marketed for feeding infants up to 6 months, as well as feeding bottles and teats. The 2016 Guidance also covers all commercially produced foods that are marketed for infants and children six months to three years of age.

## A CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Health workers, health care facilities, policymakers, and organizations supporting nutrition interventions have an important role to play. The first of the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* asks that all health facilities comply fully with the Code and relevant World Health Assembly resolutions. This quick guide provides the highlights of the Code and relevant resolutions that we must work together to uphold.

# THE INTERNATIONAL CODE

OF MARKETING OF BREAST-MILK SUBSTITUTES



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A **QUICK GUIDE** SUMMARIZING THE CODE AND RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY THAT HELP PROTECT BREASTFEEDING AROUND THE GLOBE

## SUMMARY OF THE CODE AND RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS

	COMPANIES MUST NOT...	COMPANIES MUST...
TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ No advertising or other promotion of breastmilk substitutes</li> <li>✗ No product samples</li> <li>✗ No pictures of infants and no words or pictures idealizing artificial feeding on infant formula labels</li> <li>✗ No inappropriate messages or labeling promoting other foods for infants and young children:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No images, text, or other representations that are likely to undermine or discourage breastfeeding</li> <li>– No suggested use for infants under 6 months</li> <li>– No promotion of bottle feeding</li> <li>– No endorsements by a professional body</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Infant formula labels:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Clearly state the superiority of breastfeeding and the need for the advice of a health worker</li> <li>✓ Include preparation instructions and a warning about health hazards</li> </ul> <p><b>Other foods for infants and young children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promote optimal feeding in all messages and labels</li> <li>✓ Include statements about the importance of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Not introducing complementary foods before 6 months of age</li> <li>– Continued breastfeeding for 2 years or more</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ State the appropriate age for introducing the product</li> </ul>
IN HEALTH FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ No promotion of breastmilk substitutes</li> <li>✗ No distribution of materials, including product displays, posters, calendars, or other promotional materials</li> <li>✗ No distribution of free or low-cost supplies of breastmilk substitutes or other foods for infants and young children to any part of the health care system</li> <li>✗ No education on infant and young child feeding to parents or caregivers</li> <li>✗ No gifts or financial support to health workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Only give scientific or factual product information to health professionals</li> </ul>
PRODUCT QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ No promotion of unsuitable products, such as sweetened condensed milk, for infants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure all products are of a high quality meeting the Codex Alimentarius standards</li> <li>✓ Take into account the climatic and storage conditions of the country where they are marketed</li> </ul>

### FOR HEALTH WORKERS

Health workers have a responsibility to encourage and protect breastfeeding. Here's how health workers can uphold the Code and WHA resolutions:

- ✗ Do not accept product information from companies unless it is limited to scientific and factual matters.
- ✗ Do not accept samples, gifts, incentives, equipment, or services from companies that market breastmilk substitutes or other foods for infants and young children.
- ✓ If infant formula is necessary for a baby, demonstrate its proper use and preparation, but only to the mothers or family members who need to use it. Be sure to give a clear explanation of the hazards of improper use of breastmilk substitutes.

### FOR HEALTH FACILITIES

Here's what health facilities must avoid:

- ✗ Do not allow companies to promote, display, or distribute products, placards, or posters.
- ✗ Do not accept donations of equipment or services from companies that market foods for infants and young children.
- ✗ Do not accept free or low-cost donations or samples of breastmilk substitutes or other foods for infants or young children other than those distributed through officially sanctioned health programs, and never display company brands.
- ✗ Do not allow companies to directly or indirectly provide education to parents and other caregivers.
- ✗ Do not allow the health facility to be used for commercial events, contests, or campaigns related to breastmilk substitutes or other foods for infants and young children.
- ✗ Do not allow companies to sponsor meetings of health professionals and scientific meetings.