



The Hong Kong Paediatric Society

The Hong Kong Guideline on Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes

(Endorsed on 27 Sept 2003)

Executive Summary

Ideal infant nutrition is exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and then the introduction of safe and appropriate complementary foods with continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond.

1. The guideline is produced by the Hong Kong Paediatric Society, and is representing the view of the Council of the Hong Kong Paediatric Society.
2. It is envisaged that with this new local guideline, the public, the breast milk substitute industry and professionals will have a common standard for the ethical practice of marketing breast milk substitutes in Hong Kong.
3. The guideline has taken into consideration the benefit of breast-feeding for children as well as the need of the parent and family.
4. The guideline is based on the 1981 WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (The WHO Code). The WHO Code is considered as a minimum requirement governing the practices in marketing of breast milk substitutes.

5. The guideline supports the resolutions of the World Health Assembly (WHA) 2001, recommending exclusive breast-feeding for all babies till six months and as far as possible up to two years.
6. Any marketing activity targeting at infants below six months would be considered as violation of the recommendation from WHO.
7. The Hong Kong Paediatric Society, being a professional organization, has no statutory power to implement the WHO Code in Hong Kong but as a child advocate, it will monitor the implementation of this local guideline.
8. The Council of Hong Kong Paediatric Society welcomes the reporting of any violation of the guideline and will take necessary follow-up actions.
9. Follow-up actions may include:
 - a. Upon confirmation of a violation, written warnings will be issued to the involved company.
 - b. Without satisfactory response or continuation of violation, the head office of the involved company will be notified.
 - c. Without satisfactory response from the head office of the involved company, the international organizations such as UNICEF and WHO will be informed.
 - d. The members of the HKPS and of other professional bodies involved in the care of infants and children will be informed of any company that chooses to ignore the Hong Kong Guideline or consistently violates it.



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1. No advertising or promotion of BMS to the public.
2. No free samples of BMS to mothers (direct or indirect).
3. Marketing personnel shall not contact mothers or perform any educational functions for mothers e.g. Mother/Baby clubs^{c,d}.
4. All informational and educational materials on infant feeding and child health that are produced by the BMS industry should be submitted to the Hong Kong Paediatric Society for reference.
5. Donations or low-price sales to the health care system (hospitals, clinics, and medical practitioners) of supplies of breast milk substitutes, whether for use within the system or for distribution outside them, should be discouraged. Such donations or low-price sales should only be used or distributed for infants who have to be fed on breastmilk substitutes and not be used by manufacturers or distributors as a sales inducement.
6. No gift shall be given to health workers.
7. Product information for health professionals shall be limited to scientific and factual matters.
8. Sponsorship of medical education activities shall follow the WHO Code 1981, whereby sponsored medical education activities of the Hong Kong Paediatric Society should also follow the guidelines developed by the Hong Kong Paediatric Society.

9. Labels must clearly state the superiority of breastfeeding and must include preparation instructions and warning about health hazards of inappropriate preparation.
10. Labels shall have no pictures of infants or other pictures or text (e.g. bears, toys or cute characters) idealizing the use of BMS.
11. Industry shall give employees no sales incentives for BMS, such as inclusion of sales volume in calculation of bonuses.
12. Industry shall be responsible for monitoring their marketing practices according to the principles and aims of the WHO codes and Hong Kong Guideline.

Footnotes:

- a. The WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions shall apply to the marketing of these products in Hong Kong, and are considered a minimum requirement. This local guideline aims to clarify and emphasize aspects of the WHO Code relevant to Hong Kong.
- b. **Breast Milk Substitute (BMS)** = any food marketed as a partial or total replacement for breast milk. BMS shall include all infant formulas and all complementary food promoted for partial or total replacement of breast milk under the age of six month. Parents should be informed that there are no well-established medical reasons to change to the higher protein follow-on formulas after 6 months of age. Unmodified cow's milk may be given to infants after the age of 12 months. Branded "growing-up" formula are those so-called "growing-up" products which has a similar name and/or packaging as the formulas recommended for use below two years of age
- c. "Mother/Baby Clubs" have significant potential to violate the Guideline. To facilitate monitoring of such activities, the BMS industry shall provide the Hong Kong Paediatric Society with a detailed format of these events in terms of personnel involved, activities undertaken and any products or materials distributed to ensure that promotion of BMS does not occur. The BMS industry may be asked to modify or discontinue activities that violate the guideline.
- d. Breast-feeding promotional material (videos, posters) should be displayed at these events, particularly those on infant nutrition topics.