

PROTECTING BREASTFEEDING

Maternity Stores Have a Role to Play

Although most women initiate breastfeeding when their babies are born, breastfeeding rates decrease rapidly over the first few months. Exposure to marketing strategies used by the commercial infant formula industry has an impact on breastfeeding.

It is completely possible to sell bottles, pacifiers, and infant feeding items while still reducing the pressure on families to use these products.

As a maternity store manager, you can play a role in supporting people who have decided to breastfeed. By providing a breastfeeding-friendly business facility, you are respecting the decisions of all the families who enter your store, whatever feeding method they have chosen.



“If breastfeeding did not already exist, someone who invented it today would deserve a dual Nobel Prize in medicine and economics.”¹ Keith Hansen, World Bank

Protecting breastfeeding is compatible with the sale of commercial infant formula, bottles, and other related products.

All it takes is measures to limit the commercial pressure on families exerted by the infant and young child feeding industry. By using an array of direct and insidious marketing strategies, this huge industry convinces parents that using bottles and pacifiers is the norm and does not present any risks. This leads to excessive use of these products and, as a result, a drop in the rates and duration of breastfeeding.²

It is not a matter of stigmatizing women who have decided to use these products or even of promoting breastfeeding, but of ensuring that families do not feel additional pressure as they make decisions about infant feeding.

A code that aims to protect all families

In order to protect breastfeeding, while ensuring the safe use of breast milk substitutes, including commercial infant formula, when necessary, Canada is a signatory to the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (the Code)³, adopted in 1981 at the World Health Assembly (WHA) by a 118 nations. Since then, the Code has been regularly updated by WHA resolutions.⁴ The Code’s purpose is not to prohibit the use of breast milk substitutes, but to ensure “that they are not distributed in ways that harm the protection and promotion of breastfeeding.”

Can my maternity store offer sponsorships and still comply with the Code?

Yes. To be ethical and to sustain healthy nutritional habits, however, sponsorships should not include products covered on the Code or any company logo or image of a product covered by the Code. As much as possible, businesses should also comply with the Code, in order to protect families from using these products inappropriately.

COMPLYING WITH THE CODE

Responding to the needs
of all families



Building the
trust of customers



Promoting ethical
business practices



INSPIRING IDEAS

to Respond to the Needs of All Families

Limiting visibility

Products covered under the Code should not be featured in promotional campaigns (coupons, free samples, etc.) or displayed prominently in the store (at the end of an aisle, for instance).

Visuals without bottles or soothers

Photos of a baby in a parent's arms are attractive and appropriate for all families.

Websites, online shopping sections, and blogs

More information about best practices can be found in the MAQ booklet.⁵

Being vigilant when describing products

Comparing a product with breastmilk or breasts violates the Code. It is better to not repeat this type of claim in descriptions of products sold online or in the store, in order to avoid spreading false information.

What about the staff?

Provisions in working conditions to facilitate continued breastfeeding when employees return after maternity or parental leave enable the management to be consistent with the store's commitment to breastfeeding.

Promoting community breastfeeding resources

Promotional and informational material about local breastfeeding support services can be distributed in stores, so families can find out how to contact them for help. Some services publish books and materials that maternity stores may wish to sell.

Routes du lait

Businesses that are part of the *Route du lait*⁰ gain visibility and attract customers with young children by making it easier to travel. The first step to joining the program is to contact a community breastfeeding volunteer in the region.

Inclusive baby registries and gift baskets

Stuffed animals, cloth toys, pyjamas, or pillows, without photos of products covered under the Code, are appropriate for all families and feeding choices.

Protecting personal information

Manufacturers of commercial infant formula manufacturers and other products covered under the Code sometimes purchase customer lists and advertise contests to gather contacts for telemarketing purposes. It is reassuring when stores explain that parents' information will remain confidential.

PRODUCTS WITHIN THE SCOPE

of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes*

- All food and beverages for children under 36 months of age
- Bottles and nipples
- Pacifiers



Article 5.3 of the Code stipulates that “there should be no point-of-sale advertising, giving of samples, or any other promotion device to induce sales directly to the consumer at the retail level, such as special displays, discount coupons, premiums, special sales, loss-leaders and tie-in sales, for products within the scope of this Code.”³

DID YOU KNOW?

Two years or longer

Health Canada, among other groups, recommends sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding after six months.⁷

Early weaning

Only 8% of mothers continue breastfeeding as long as they planned.⁸ The main reason given for discontinuing breastfeeding earlier is their perception that they do not produce enough milk,⁹ although insufficient milk supply is actually rare and low supply is often related to the use of commercial infant formula, bottles, or pacifiers.

Disproportionate investments

Marketing investments made by manufacturers of products covered under the Code are much higher than the amounts invested by the public sector in breastfeeding promotion.

Open cups

Many parents mistakenly believe that their child must learn to drink from a bottle. In fact, open cups are an alternative that is appropriate for all infants and help them learn important feeding skills.¹⁰

Maternity stores can meet the needs of all families, while reducing the pressures exerted by the commercial infant formula industry.

References

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Your
breastfeeding friendly
resource

MouvementAllaitement.org

BREASTFEEDING RESOURCES

Community Resources

Trained support people

Community workers and volunteers who provide breastfeeding support have received basic education and training to enable them to answer a wide range of questions. They can also identify common breastfeeding difficulties and suggest solutions.

Peer support

Peer support has a proven positive effect on breastfeeding duration and exclusivity.^{1,2} Breastfeeding volunteers have personal experience and provide support to help other breastfeeding parents reach their goals. Peer supporters may provide remote, virtual, or in-person services individually or in groups. Optimal results are associated with programs connecting an expectant parent with a volunteer during pregnancy.

Where to find community breastfeeding support services

In Quebec, search by region:

mouvementallaitement.org/ressources

In other locations in Canada:

safelyfed.ca/canadian-breastfeeding-resources

References

1. Dennis CL. (2002). Breastfeeding initiation and duration: a 1990-2000 literature review. *J Obstet Gynecol Neonatal Nurs* 31(1):12-32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1552-6909.2002.tb00019.x>
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When to access these resources?

Any time! Whether parents have a quick question or are worried about a particular situation, such as being separated from their child or weaning, breastfeeding support people can help.

Are their services limited to breastfeeding support?

The range of services provided by community support people varies. They can also suggest reliable sources of information and services to help with parenting and nutrition questions.

Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs)

Certified professionals

Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are specialists in breastfeeding who have clinical expertise. IBCLCs are certified by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners.

Specialized services

IBCLCs work within a professional framework that includes a scope of practice and a code of ethics. They are qualified to conduct comprehensive examinations to resolve persistent or complex breastfeeding issues. An IBCLC may work for a health authority, a community organization, a pharmacy, a specialized breastfeeding clinic, or a medical clinic, or they may have a private practice.



Your breastfeeding friendly resource
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