

PROTECTING BREASTFEEDING

Local Pharmacies Have a Role to Play

The majority of women begin breastfeeding immediately after childbirth. The early weeks with a newborn are intense and a parent's need for support is particularly great in the first months of their baby's life.

As a pharmacist, you are a reliable and accessible resource for parents. You can help your clients reach their breastfeeding goals.

As a pharmacist, you certainly recognize the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on the behaviour of families, as well as the importance of your role in counselling and supporting your clients as they make decisions about their healthcare.



L'Ordre des pharmaciens du Québec (the Quebec Order of Pharmacists) “encourages anyone who sells commercial infant formula to become familiar with the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and to review their marketing practices.”¹

A major gap

There is a large gap between reality and recommendations. In Québec, only 62% of women are still breastfeeding their babies at four months and 74% of mothers introduce other fluids or solid foods before the age of six months.² Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society recommend breastfeeding exclusively for six months and sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding after six months.³

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)⁴, adopted in 1981 at the World Health Assembly (WHA) by a 118 nations. Since then, the Code has been regularly updated by WHA resolutions.⁵ 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.*” Thus, the Code allows health professionals to maintain a consistent medical discourse about infant feeding.

Marketing versus protecting breastfeeding

Commercial infant formula manufacturers—whose objective is to increase sales through a variety of marketing tactics—have a tendency to minimize the differences between commercial infant formula and human milk. People who are worried about having a low milk supply (this is the second most frequently cited reason for introducing other fluids or solid foods before the age of six months⁶) are sensitive to all forms of advertising because they believe their babies need an additional source of nutrition. Here's where you can make a big difference. Your role is to give parents correct information about commercial infant formula, bottles, and artificial nipples, as well as the risks associated with their use.⁷

COMPLYING WITH THE CODE

protects BREASTFEEDING
from unethical practices



protects PROFESSIONALS
from conflicts of interest



protects THE PUBLIC
from corporate pressure



INSPIRING IDEAS

Steps Pharmacies Have Taken

“Products within the scope of the Code that we can’t keep behind the counter are placed near the checkout. **A sign is posted that invites parents to ask us** any questions they might have about feeding their baby.”

“I often explain to parents that there are **other ways besides bottles** to give fluids to babies: a spoon, a cup, a supplementary nutrition system. All this can help them reach their breastfeeding goals.”

“When a client wants to buy a pump I make sure she is getting support from a peer group before I sell it, because **pumping milk can have an effect on how breastfeeding will go** from there. Then I make sure the flange is the right size and explain how the breast pump works.”

“When parents want to buy commercial infant formula, I ask them how they are feeding their child. If the baby is being breastfed but the mother is having problems or is concerned, **I let them know about breastfeeding support services.**”

“In our pharmacy, we offer **breastfeeding consultations with an IBCLC** (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant). Families really appreciate that; they feel supported and more confident about their parenting.”

“We give the *From Tiny Tot to Toddler* book⁸ to families who haven’t received their copy.”

It is not a matter of promoting breastfeeding so much as it is one of supporting parents in their decisions.

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



Articles 4.2 and 7.2 of the Code stipulate that informational and educational materials should not “use any pictures or text which may idealize the use of breast-milk substitutes” or “imply or create a belief that bottle feeding is equivalent or superior to breastfeeding.”²

Article 5 stipulates that “there should be no point-of-sale advertising, giving of samples, or other promotion device” of products within the scope of the Code.²

Suggestions TO TAKE ACTION

Code-compliant information

Does the breastfeeding information available to parents comply with the Code, in both the text and the illustrations? For example, you can ensure there are no pictures of a baby with a bottle or a soother. You can refuse to distribute documents that do not comply with the Code under your banner, logo, or company name.

Marketing

The person responsible for marketing can contact the MAQ to learn more about breastfeeding-friendly environments 9 in order to better meet the needs of families using your pharmacy.

Education

You and your team can develop your knowledge about breastfeeding individually or as a group. Contact your Public Health office for more information.

What are other pharmacies doing?

Are you familiar with the breastfeeding-friendly pharmacy initiative?¹⁰

And what you can do for your employees?

Take measures to make it easier for your employees to continue breastfeeding when they return to work; this is a great way to model support and to protect breastfeeding.

References

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Your
breastfeeding friendly
resource

MouvementAllaitement.org

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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

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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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