

PROTECTING BREASTFEEDING Websites and Blogs Have a Role to Play

The first objective of commercial infant formula manufacturers is to increase sales. To sell their products, they use a variety of marketing tactics that put pressure on parents as well as content editors.

By providing income to owners or by sponsoring websites and blogs that are popular with parents, they can influence content to promote their products. This has a negative impact on breastfeeding.

As content creators and editors, through the influence you have on your readers, you can contribute to the creation of breastfeeding-friendly environments that will benefit every family with young children.



“The baby food industry uses integrated market and political strategies to shape first-foods systems in ways that drive and sustain milk formula market expansion, on a global scale.”¹

A major gap

There is a large gap between reality and recommendations. Although most women initiate breastfeeding immediately after childbirth, breastfeeding rates decrease rapidly over the first few weeks. In Québec, only 62% are still breastfeeding their baby at four months,² a long way from recommendations. Health Canada and other organizations recommend breastfeeding exclusively for six months and sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding after six months.³

The normalization of commercial infant formula, bottles, and pacifiers:

- harms breastfeeding,
- has a negative impact on the choice to breastfeed,
- can undermine parents’ self-esteem and parenting abilities.

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.*” It also aims to counter the idealization of commercial infant formula and bottles in photos or information. For example, by refusing to publish photos of children with bottles or artificial nipples you are helping to protect breastfeeding by applying the Code.

A personal decision, but a collective responsibility

Breastfeeding is a decision that belongs to the people doing it, but these people need to feel supported by everyone around them. Sharing in the collective responsibility for breastfeeding enables the community to reduce the inequality of women and men and to reduce social, cultural, and consumer pressures on women. This is why protecting breastfeeding is a community issue.

USE YOUR POWER AS AN INFLUENCER TO

help create breastfeeding-friendly environments



reassure families about their parenting abilities



counter unethical corporate practices



ALTERNATIVES for Inspiring Web Content

Use images without bottles and pacifiers

Babies held in people's arms are suitable for all contexts.

Promote community breastfeeding resources

You can help parents find out about these resources on your website or blog. Families will appreciate your efforts.

Strengthen your credibility

Protecting your website or blog from the influence of unethical practices will strengthen your credibility. It is important to be vigilant when you are confronted with marketing methods such as distributing free samples of commercial infant formula.

Filter your advertising

Automatic advertising, such as Google provides, can be filtered to avoid ads from commercial infant formula manufacturers.

Limit visibility

Products covered by the Code should never be promoted or displayed prominently.

Associate with others who are Code-compliant

Associating with other content editors and distributors who also respect the Code presents consistent information and images to readers and users.

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.”*⁴

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.⁴

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



Be careful when selling products covered by the Code

It is possible to sell products covered by the Code without violating the Code. All you need to do is avoid posting or transcribing descriptions that compare products to human milk or breastfeeding, and to choose illustrations that do not include pictures of a baby.

Avoid conflicts of interest

Ideally, you should refuse any invitation to work with commercial infant formula manufacturers. When that is not possible, you should inform visitors to your site or blog of any conflict of interest; being transparent will help maintain their trust.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes it takes just one bottle to jeopardize breastfeeding

A baby may prefer a bottle, refuse to breastfeed, or latch on in a way that injures the nipple.⁷

Breastfeeding is the most economical way to feed children

Introducing commercial infant formula undermines breastfeeding and may also affect the financial situation of families; it may be difficult for them to afford commercial infant formula once the free trial or coupons have run out.

The terms “formula” and “baby milk” are misleading

We have chosen to use “commercial infant formula” here, but the word “formula” can be misleading. It is intended to give artificial milk a scientific quality; people may believe this is a scientific formulation that has been thoroughly researched in a lab. “Baby milk,” on the other hand, gives the impression that this is the normal milk for babies. Neither perception is true. These terms are part of the strategy commercial infant formula manufacturers use to increase their credibility in the eyes of the public.

“Artificial infant milk,” “artificial baby milk,” or “commercial milk substitute” are other alternatives that may be worth considering. Emphasizing the commercial or artificial nature of infant formula contributes to protecting breastfeeding and valuing human milk.

\$55 billion market in 2019

The global market for breast milk substitutes is extremely lucrative and is flourishing. The world’s production has doubled between 2005 to 2019¹.

Unnecessary commercial food

Basic foods are appropriate to complete a breastfed or formula-fed baby’s diet. Processed foods and beverages, which are generally more expensive and contain more sugar, are unnecessary. Some toddler milks are not advised for use.⁸

References

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7. La Leche League France. (2017). Le point sur la confusion sein-tétine. *Dossiers de l’allaitement* 119. <https://www.llfFrance.org/vous-informer/fonds-documentaire/dossiers-de-l-allaitement/1942-da-119-le-point-sur-la-confusion-sein-tetine>
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Together, we can make breastfeeding support easier to access than commercial infant formula.



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

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>
2. McFadden A, et al. (2017). Support for healthy breastfeeding mothers with healthy term babies. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2(2):CD001141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd001141.pub5>

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
MouvementAllaitement.org