

PROTECTING BREASTFEEDING

Grocery Stores Have a Role to Play

Did you know that people who breastfeed can burn up to 400 additional calories every day?¹ Breastfeeding is the safest and best adapted way to feed babies. From six months on, complementary foods are added to the baby's diet along with continued breastfeeding.

Healthy eating habits start taking shape in infancy. What practices have you adopted to help families develop sound nutritional choices?

As a grocery store manager, you play a key role in promoting healthy eating habits from the time a baby is born. By providing a breastfeeding-friendly business facility, you can meet the needs of all the families who enter your store.



“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*

For infants and young children, healthy eating habits start with breastfeeding and continue with the introduction of appropriate complementary foods: vegetables, cereals and grains, and foods rich in iron and protein. In Quebec, although 94% of women initiate breastfeeding when their babies are born, breastfeeding rates decrease rapidly over the first few weeks. Only 8% of mothers continue breastfeeding as long as they planned.⁴ Health Canada, among other groups, recommends breastfeeding exclusively for six months and sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding after six months.⁵

Creating breastfeeding-friendly environments also means reducing the pressure exerted by manufacturers and distributors of commercial infant formula. Among the factors that contribute to the drop in breastfeeding rates, aggressive marketing practices by the infant and toddler feeding industry play a substantial role in exerting enormous pressure on families.⁶

Protecting breastfeeding is compatible with the sale of commercial infant formula, bottles, and other related products. 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)⁷, adopted in 1981 at the World Health Assembly (WHA) by a 118 nations. Since then, the Code has been regularly updated by WHA resolutions.⁷ 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.”

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

It is completely acceptable to **sell products covered under the Code**. However, they should not be featured or displayed prominently (at the end of an aisle, for instance).

If possible, it is better to **avoid taking part in promotional campaigns** (coupons, free samples, etc.) for products covered under the Code, so families will not feel more pressured.

Some breastfeeding items are essential goods (nursing pads, breastmilk storage bags, etc.). They can be placed in the same aisle as other hygiene products.

When decorating a store or indicating aisles where baby or children's items are found, **visuals without bottles or pacifiers** and with a baby in a parent's arms are attractive and appropriate for all families.

Best practices for **websites, online shopping sections,** and in social media can be found in the MAQ booklet.⁹

Vigilance is necessary 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.

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.

Businesses that are part of the *Route du lait*¹⁰ 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.

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.”⁷

Can my grocery 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

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.

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. In certain cases, it is not advised to use specific toddler milks.¹¹

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 character; people may believe this is a scientific formulation which has been thoroughly researched in a lab. The OLF recommends the use of “préparation commerciale pour nourrissons” in French.¹²

Grocery stores play a significant role in communities. They can meet the needs of all families while contributing to healthy nutrition from infancy on.

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

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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
MouvementAllaitement.org