

WHO's Breastmilk Substitute Code

THE CODE

In 1981, the World Health Assembly adopted *The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes*, as a tool to protect breastfeeding. [The Innocenti Declaration](#) of 1990 calls on all governments to implement the *Code* by 1995.

Formula marketing targets women. New mothers are given free samples of formula, babies are given bottles in hospitals, coupons or food samples arrive in the mail, or booklets and videotapes are distributed on breastfeeding and weaning. The *Code* prohibits marketing of these products in these ways. It covers formula, other milk products, cereals, teas and juices, as well as bottles and teats.

The Code has 10 important provisions.

- NO advertising of any of these products to the public
- NO free samples to mothers
- NO promotion of products in health care facilities, including the distribution of free or low-cost supplies
- NO company sales representatives to advise mothers
- NO gifts or personal samples to health workers
- NO words or pictures idealising artificial feeding, or pictures of infants on labels of infant milk containers
- Information to health workers should be scientific and factual
- ALL information on artificial infant feeding, including that on labels, should explain the benefits of breastfeeding and the costs and hazards associated with artificial feeding
- Unsuitable products, such as sweetened condensed milk, should not be promoted for babies
- Manufacturers and distributors should comply with the *Code's* provisions even if countries have not adopted laws or other measures.