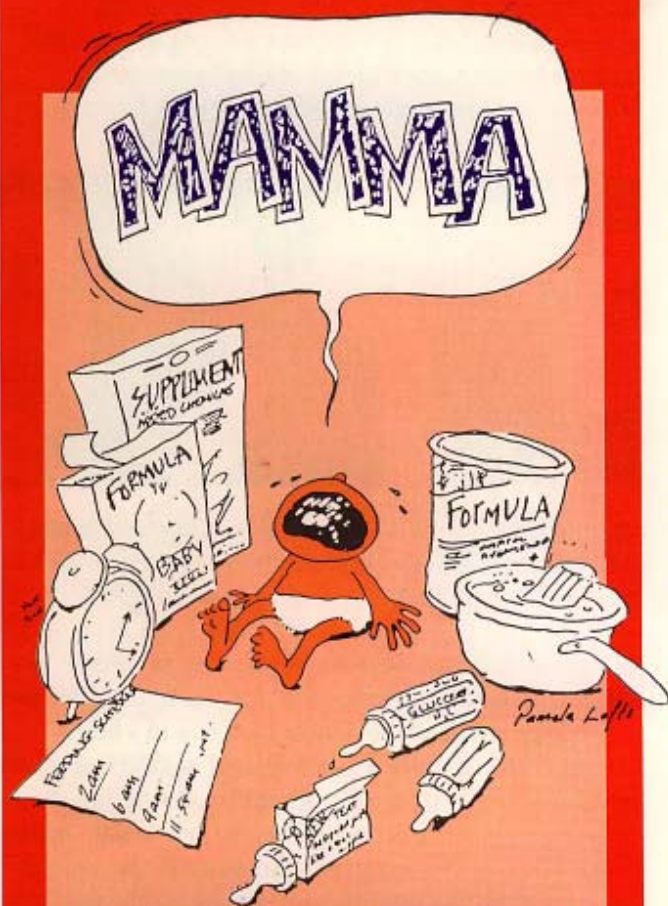


Protect Breastfeeding:

Making the Code Work



The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes is the focus for World Breastfeeding Week 1994. The goals of the Week are to:

- raise awareness about the International Code, its purpose and its potential;
- remind governments of the Innocenti target date and encourage them to introduce national rules and regulations using the Code as a minimum; and
- stimulate public interest groups, professional organisations and the general public to monitor enforcement of the Code.

Every day, as many as 4,000 infants and young children die because they are not breastfed. Why does this daily tragedy continue? According to James Grant, UNICEF's Executive Director, it is because their mothers are not empowered with enough knowledge about breastfeeding and do not receive enough motivation and support. A big part of the blame for this lack of knowledge, motivation and support lies with the competition to breastmilk, the well-funded marketing of breastmilk substitutes and other products for infant feeding.

Over many years, companies have invented clever slogans, striking images, free samples or supplies, and all kinds of appealing gifts to persuade mothers and health workers that while 'breast is best', bottle feeding is almost as good as breastfeeding. Today, as benefits of breastfeeding are being rediscovered, parents and health workers all over the world are realising the tragic consequences of allowing commercial interests to interfere with infant feeding practices.

The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981, is a tool to protect breastfeeding. However, to be effective it must be made to work in each country. The *Innocenti Declaration*, calls on *all* governments to implement the International Code and other related resolutions of the World Health Assembly by 1995. This Declaration was adopted at a meeting of high-level policy makers from many countries, in Florence, Italy, August 1990.

Each year, World Breastfeeding Week takes up an important theme to help protect, promote and support breastfeeding. This year the Week focuses on ways to protect breastfeeding by eliminating advertising and other harmful marketing practices for infant feeding products.



Marketing targets women!

- » Did you ever notice calendars or posters on the walls of a hospital or clinic with pictures of beautiful babies or breastfeeding mothers and a company brand name or logo?
- » When your baby was born, did you receive a free sample of infant formula?
- » Was your baby given a bottle in the hospital even before you had a chance to start breastfeeding?
- » Did you receive coupons or infant food samples in the mail? Were you given a 'free' number to phone for advice on baby feeding?
- » Did you receive a booklet or a videotape from an infant food company that explained all about breastfeeding or weaning?

These are only a few of the marketing methods infant food companies use to tempt mothers to use their products. You may be surprised about the breastfeeding booklet: all companies today 'say' they support breastfeeding, but do they? Many people believe what is printed without realising that there is hidden persuasion inside the booklets.