

Re-creating breastfeeding cultures

The promotion of bottle feeding over the last 30 to 40 years has been heavily supported by powerful economic interests — the baby milk industry, the food industry and feeding bottle manufacturers. In promoting their products, they have used clever and effective marketing strategies to emphasise the possible benefits of these products, but never mentioned the disadvantages or the benefits lost by not breastfeeding. This biased information has led to a bottle feeding culture. The International Code can be used to either maintain or re-create a breastfeeding culture.

How? First, bottle feeding can be made less popular and less socially acceptable by enforcing the Code and by illustrating the hazards of artificial feeding. Second, examining the way companies promote bottle feeding can give ideas and techniques to promote breastfeeding. Why allow these expensive and effective marketing techniques to serve only commercial interests?

Breastfeeding

For years, baby food companies have supported baby contests where the winning baby was fed on a particular brand of milk. Why not have a breastfed baby contest? Similarly, health care facilities around the world have posters displaying babies who are linked in one way or another to companies. There are millions of beautiful breastfed babies. Why not encourage local photographers and local business groups to sponsor photo contests and posters of breastfed babies?

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the benefits of breastfeeding...

Why breastfeed?

Babies, their mothers, their families, their community, their environment, even the economy of the country in which they live, all benefit from breastfeeding.

Benefits for babies

- Exclusive breastfeeding meets **all** the nutritional needs of a baby for the first four to six months and continues to make a significant contribution to the baby's nutritional and emotional health into the second year and beyond.
- Breastfed babies have stronger immune systems and are healthier than bottle-fed babies.
- Research shows that breastfeeding can save the lives of over 1,500,000 babies who die every year from diseases such as diarrhoea and pneumonia.

Benefits for women

- Breastfeeding encourages women's self-confidence and self-reliance, as they are able to provide quality care for their children.

- Breastfeeding strengthens the bond between a mother and her child.
- Women who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast and ovarian cancers.
- Breastfeeding helps mothers get back into shape faster.

Benefits to the economy

- The health service saves money by not having to buy infant feeding products and by not having to use nursing time to bottle-feed babies. It also saves money indirectly because breastfed babies are less frequently and less severely ill.
- Companies with mother- and baby-friendly workplaces increase productivity by less absenteeism and a more loyal workforce.
- Countries save foreign exchange by not having to import breastmilk substitutes.

Benefits for families

- Breastfeeding mothers are less likely to become pregnant. The child-spacing effect of breastfeeding is important for women for whom contraception is unavailable, unaffordable, or unacceptable.
- Breastfeeding saves families the time and money that would be used for bottle feeding and for treating the illnesses caused by bottle feeding.
- Breastfeeding contributes to food security and to a family's self-sufficiency.

1994 is the International Year of the Family and the protection of breastfeeding is a key measure in protecting families everywhere and ensuring their happy and healthy development.