



June 2006

*Note regarding use of some commonly available materials for mothers<sup>1</sup>*

**It is a requirement of a Baby-friendly hospital that they abide fully by the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the related subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly. Failure to do so can result in loss of the award. It is recommended that hospitals aiming for the Baby-friendly award also abide by the Code.**

All materials distributed to pregnant women, postnatal mothers or parents of infants and young children in the hospital and linked ante-natal/post-natal clinics should be regularly checked by knowledgeable hospital staff. Ideally materials would be checked in the pre-printing stage so changes could be made if needed.

Materials may give incorrect information or unwanted impressions through the articles, advertisements or illustrations. For example, photographs of breastfeeding should show good positioning and attachment, particularly a wide open mouth. Breastfeeding should be phrased as the norm rather than a choice that some mothers might make. Baby-friendly practices should also be considered the norm, not by special request or as an optional practice. Reflect on the difference between phrasing breastfeeding as important and the standard and phrasing breastfeeding as a benefit “above the norm”. For example, if breastfeeding babies have less risk of illness and better brain development, what is this less or better than?

Ads for bottles, teats, pacifiers, formula of any type, teas or juices for infants give the impression that the hospital approves of or even encourages the use of these products. It is expected that these types of ads, or articles promoting these products do not appear in magazines that a Baby-friendly hospital makes available to pregnant women/mothers.

When distributing materials, consider if you are happy to give advertisements to parents that encourage them to contact the advertiser for further marketing such as a video marketing how the company’s products are the solution to a long list of difficulties with breastfeeding, a catalogue of their products including bottles and teats, or a website marketing breastmilk substitutes. A disclaimer such as “this hospital believes that it is safe to use the products advertised in this magazine” is questionable when there are known risks from using bottles and teats and breast milk substitutes.

Ensure that information given to antenatal women avoids confusion or unrealistic expectations with statements such as “A good support bra will help your breasts to return to normal.” Pregnancy more so than breastfeeding affects breast shape and breasts normally do not return to the shape they were before the first pregnancy regardless of feeding method. This statement could imply that there is something abnormal about breasts that mature. Or “The first milk is less rich than breast milk, though it is of benefit to your baby ...” Colostrum is very rich and very important to an infant. This statement could imply that it is of low value. Checklists for hospital bag that state “if you plan to breastfeed” assumes this is the less likely choice. Watch for statements that imply breastfeeding mothers have extra needs such as “the extra energy required for breastfeeding.” Breastfeeding is normal, not extra.

For some of the materials the hospital has a contract with the company and receives something in return for distribution of the materials. Ensure that the terms of the contract include there will be no advertising of products covered by the International Code (and subsequent resolutions) including breastmilk substitutes, bottles, teats, and soothers. In addition, that all materials will be given to a designated hospital person for through review and in sufficient time before printing to allow any changes if needed. When publications carry a HSE or hospital logo it implies that it is approved by someone in the HSE/hospital.

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<sup>1</sup> These materials may not be materials that you distribute but the information in shared in case you do provide them.