

# ICDC FOCUS



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## OUTRAGEOUS CLAIMS

Nutrition and Health Claims on foods for infants and young children should not be permitted because they are:

- marketing tools,
- misleading,
- unsubstantiated by independent science

Claims are different from required nutrition information. They are used primarily as promotional marketing tools and thus violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions.

If new ingredients are found to be essential, they should be in all formula and all infant foods and not give the impression that the products with additives are like breastmilk.

**VIOLATION**

Most trusted by mothers\* for babies aged 6 months onwards

**The Smart Formula For Smart Babies**

Smart babies help the world. Similac Advance Follow-on formula is specially formulated with a PRO-CALC® Fortification of 100% vegetable fat based on Palm Olein Oil that provides EPA-DHA omega-3 fatty acids and essential amino acids. In addition, Similac Advance is fortified with longer-chain, supporting naturally occurring omega-3 fatty acids that are clinically proven to be essential for enhancing mental and physical development. \*No scientific independent research shows Similac Advance is most trusted by mothers for babies aged 6 months onwards.

Smart babies help the world. Similac Advance is fortified with:

- DHA & AA from Omega 3 & 6 - essential for mental and visual development
- Taurine - supports critical brain function
- Nucleotides - for stronger resistance
- Iron - enhances mental and physical development

Available at all leading supermarkets. For more information, please contact our nearest distributor of ICD-1000.

**Similac**

**Clinically Proven**

This is why smart mothers trust Similac. Advise on the scientific studies for their babies!

\*Independent source: AC Nielsen (Retail Scanner) 2002 region.

**ABBOTT**  
The Leader in Pediatric Nutrition

Abbott Laboratories, 51 The Mall, Singapore 117624. Tel: 673 8333. Website: www.aabbott.com.sg

Please complete all sections for correct completion. \*1. Indicate your age (Indicate 4 for 40 and above only).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The latest phenomenon in the marketing of breastmilk substitutes is a tremendous upsurge in nutritional and health claims. Baby food companies have long promoted the benefits of their products but now their marketing of products using nutrition and health claims is much more aggressive. These claims aim to persuade parents to purchase formula and infant foods based on suggested enhanced nutrition and health benefits.

Such glamourising claims are misleading and unsubstantiated by scientific evidence. Due to their promotional nature, they violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.

The International Code seeks to protect breastfeeding and infant and young child health. One and a half to three million babies die every year because they are not or not adequately breastfed. Millions more remain stunted for life.

### Nutrition and health claims are marketing tools.

#### DHA & AA\*: magic fatty acids for smart kids?

Formulas supplemented with fatty acids are being promoted as a way to bolster intelligence and improve eyesight in infants.

Marketing messages will have parents believe that visual, cognitive, intellectual advantages can be derived from additives to cows' milk. Parents persuaded by intense advertising buy these products even though there may be unknown adverse side-effects and little evidence to show that the additives perform the functions as claimed. Not wanting their babies to "lose out", parents are willing to fork out an additional US\$200 a year on average to buy the products. The premium price has resulted in giving a designer-like prestige to the products which overshadows breastmilk; the best available source of infant nutrition.

Regulatory agencies have been slow to challenge these claims, although in Canada, Mead Johnson has been told by the Food Inspection Agency to stop making claims about how the DHA and ARA fatty acids in its Enfamil Lipil infant formula improve eyesight and intelligence.

\* DHA (docosahexaenoic acid)  
ARA or AA (arachidonic acid)

Abbott claims that the inclusion of DHA, ARA, taurine, nucleotides and iron in its Similac Advance Follow-on formula makes babies smarter. This magazine advertisement shows an Abbott baby so smart that it can handle a computer! (Singapore)

**Designer formulas** - A worldwide monitoring survey by IBFAN reveals that 11 out of 16 companies have jumped on the DHA & ARA bandwagon to ride on the intelligence theme. Parents pay more for presumed benefits they would get free and better from breastmilk. DHA & ARA are not digested and absorbed in the same way as the fats in breastmilk. They have a different chemical configuration and need enzymes and other factors to become bio-active.

**Who sells the magic additives?**

DHA-ARA blend in formula products are mostly derived from algae and fungi. The Martek company sells the bulk and earned more than \$161 million in 2004 on the sale of additives for infant formula.

A Mead Johnson leaflet promotes **Enfamil Lipil** as the only formula "that has **LIPIL**, a blend of natural nutrients that may help optimise eye and brain development" and says it is "a blend of DHA & ARA: Nutrients found in breastmilk". It offers savings of up to \$4 by sending contact information and the baby's birth date. (USA)



Health facilities receive card-shaped advertisements promoting **Meiji FU**. DHA is promoted as "Brain Gold" and the text catch phrase is "Brighter brain and brighter eyes". (Hong Kong)



A leaflet for **Dumex** infant formula found in health care units announces its "new formulation, new package", fortified with AA and DHA, with claims of being closer to breastmilk, promoting good mental health and strengthening resistance to disease. (China)

Nestle introduces its **Nestogen DHA** product fortified with additional benefits, such as "Prebio" and "More Calcium". The large colourful booklet also announces that Nestle is "producing a wide range of exclusive nutrition breakthroughs for the rapid overall growth of infants". Nestle idealises its products by claiming they provide healthier minds and sharper eyesight, as well as being a "Bone Builder" and promoting a "Healthy Digestive System". (Philippines)



Another Wyeth pamphlet promotes **Promil Gold** and **Progress Gold** with a picture of blocks of DHA and AA held by a clever carrot with a graduation cap. The catch phrase claims: "Wyeth Golden Baby, with future of high achievements". (China)

Wyeth leaflet, "Promil Gold - 7 IQ points advantage", promotes the IQ advantage of the product over other foods and milks. (Singapore)





▲ A Nestle leaflet claims that the Bifidus in Nan makes “excellent baby”, and proclaims that “raising an intelligent baby is no longer an impossible dream” with Nan 1 and Nan 2. (China)



▶ An advertisement in a magazine by Mead Johnson claims that **Enfapro A+** benefits babies’ eyesight and intelligence because of the addition of DHA and ARA elements. (China)

▶ This Abbott slogan, “IQ: most nutritious, baby totally brilliant” is very effective in terms of sales. It links Abbott’s **Gain Advance** with brain development and claims it will strengthen baby’s immunological defence. The large letters IQ and the smart baby imply the baby will be more intelligent. (Hong Kong)



### Nutrition and health claims give the impression that the products are like breastmilk

Some products claim that they are “higher” in a certain ingredient or effect, “improved” through compositional tinkering, “superior” to another product, “closer to” the real thing or “brighter brain” etc. The real comparison, however, is not made to breastmilk as the gold standard, but to other commercial formulas. The wording is clever and subtle - few consumers will ask “better... than what?”.

When a label claims the product to be “easier to digest” the comparison is not completed and the impression left is that the product is better than breastmilk. When the advertisement reads, “proven to result in higher early mental development scores”, the impression is made that using this formula will result in smarter babies.



▶ A Nestle leaflet promotes **Nan HA**, **Nan 1** and **2**, containing “Complete Nutrition for healthy growth and development” of the baby’s brain, bone and body. (Thailand)



Friesland’s “Triple Care” Formulation of “Digestion, Resistance and Development” is found in 2 different brands in 2 different countries: **Frisomel** in Singapore and **Dutch Lady** in Vietnam.



▶ A Health guide book for mother and child promotes **Dumex 1** and **2** as similar to breastmilk, with “best nutrition for highest brain development”. Three babies symbolise the Dumex **3N** slogan (Nature, Nurture and Nutrition.) (Thailand)



▶ Nestle promotes **Lactogen 1** by distributing a four-page leaflet in health facilities. It has packshots of Lactogen 1 with ‘rays’ emanating from the can and arching towards the baby’s brain, bones and body, implying the product is beneficial to the baby’s growth and development. Inside pages show how various components contribute to the healthy growth of brain, bones and body. (Vietnam)

## Nutrition and health claims for infant formulas are misleading

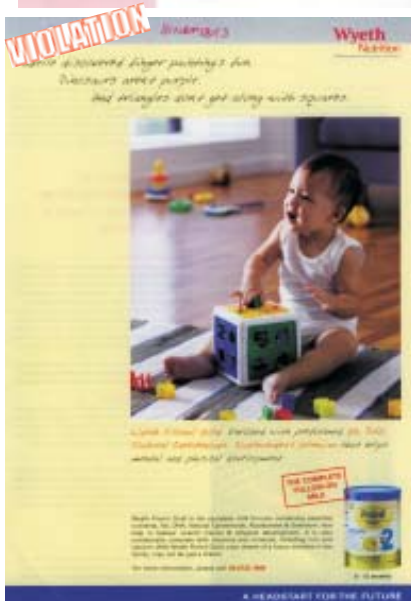
For infant formulas, any statement claiming health benefits, nutritional superiority or equivalence to breastmilk is untrue. Current scientific evidence confirms increased mortality rates and increased rates for infectious diseases, chronic diseases, auto-immune diseases and less than optimal development and growth such as lower cognitive and visual development and increased risk for obesity. To be truthful to parents, these products should be labelled instead with warnings about increased health risks rather than misleading them to think there are health benefits.



▶ Promotional materials compare Snow products to breastmilk. The composition of Snow Brand P7L Beta is said to be based on research on the breastmilk of Japanese mothers. Another booklet compares its ratio of omega 3 and 6 with that of breastmilk. It also claims to encourage good bowel movements with the addition of oligosaccharide. (Thailand)



▶ An ad in a scientific journal uses the popularity of organic products to promote HiPP organic infant and follow-up milks. The ad compares the products to breastmilk: "formulated to be as nutritionally close to breastmilk as possible." (UK)



▶ An advertisement in the *Community Practitioner* journal promotes Cow & Gate Premium as "nutritionally complete" with a "unique calcium: phosphorus ratio for healthy bones for life"... "the first choice to promote healthy growth when not breastfeeding". (UK)

▶ An ad for Promil Gold in the *Motherhood* magazine claims the product is "Enriched with preformed AA, DHA, natural carotenoids, nucleotides & selenium that help mental and physical development". (Singapore)



## The scientific evidence used to justify nutrition and health claims is not independent

When investigating the evidence to determine the truthfulness of claims, INFACCT Canada found that • authors of "scientific" articles were frequently paid by the manufacturer of the product to do the research (e.g. Mead Johnson), • authors were employees of the manufacturer, • the articles did not study the specific brand for which the claims were made, • the scientific evidence was not published in peer review journals, • the "evidence" was available in abstract format only. Frequently also, the claims were in contradiction with generally accepted scientific evidence. (see Fewtrell, M.S. et al. *Pediatrics* 110:73-82, 2002.)

Text adapted from IBFAN position paper on claims, available at [www.ibfan.org](http://www.ibfan.org).