

**Information leaflet on
Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Formula Milk and
Related Products, and Food Products for
Infants & Young Children (“HK Code”)**



Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Formula Milk and Related Products, and Food Products for Infants & Young Children (“HK Code”)

Background

The Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Formula Milk and Related Products, and Food Products for Infants & Young Children (HK Code) is a set of voluntary guidelines that aim at providing guidance on the proper practices that manufacturers and distributors (M&Ds) should adopt in relation to the marketing of formula milk, feeding bottles and teats, and prepackaged food products for infants and young children under the age of 36 months.

The HK Code was drawn up based on the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the relevant subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions, the latest guidance and principles laid down by the WHO, as well as the local context.

We encourage M&Ds to observe the principles promoted by this Code when formulating their marketing strategies and practices.

The following is a brief summary of the HK Code.

Aim

The HK Code aims to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants and young children by protecting breastfeeding and ensuring the proper use of designated products, on the basis of adequate and unbiased information and through appropriate marketing.

Scope

The HK Code applies to the following designated products for infants and young children under 36 months of age:

- Formula milk (including infant formula, follow-up formula and formula for special medical purposes);
- Formula milk related products: feeding bottles and teats, and
- Prepackaged food for infants and young children.

Information and Education (to the general public, expectant parents and parents)

Misleading or incorrect information and educational materials on infant and young child feeding can be harmful. Members of the public should make their own choices regarding the feeding of their infants and young children, based on unbiased information and consistent professional advice. To protect parents from undue commercial influences when making feeding decisions, the HK Code advises M&Ds against organising health educational activities or providing *informational / educational materials about breastfeeding and formula milk feeding*. If deemed necessary, M&Ds may distribute and reproduce the informational / educational materials on breastfeeding and formula milk feeding prepared by the Department of Health, with the source of information acknowledged.

Product information on formula milk, feeding bottles and teats should only be provided upon request, and must be restricted to factual and correct information which does not undermine or discourage breastfeeding. Such product information may be made available on the websites of M&Ds, or provided via emails, hotlines and various channels upon request by the potential recipient. *Notification of pre-order service for formula milk* may be provided, but should only contain essential information pertaining to the operation of the order and delivery arrangements.

Promotion to the Public

For formula milk, feeding bottles and teats:

M&Ds should not carry out promotional activities involving formula milk and formula milk related products. Such activities include but are not limited to advertising, using special displays, and offering prizes or gifts such as free samples.

For prepackaged food for infants and young children:

M&Ds may promote prepackaged food for infants and young children, provided that the promotional activity does not:

- cover infants less than 6 months of age,
- take place in health care facilities, or
- promote formula milk or formula milk related products.

For all designated products (formula milk, feeding bottles and teats, and prepackaged food for infants and young children):

- There should be no promotional activities involving infants, young children, expectant parents or parents of children under 36 months of age, e.g. baby crawling competitions, performed or sponsored by M&Ds for the purpose of promoting designated products.
- Personal details of infants, young children, expectant parents or parents of children under 36 months of age, e.g. personal information for joining mothers' club, should not be obtained directly or indirectly by M&Ds for the purpose of promoting designated products.

Promotion in Health and Child Care Facility

For mothers and families of young infants, professional endorsement is a powerful influence on feeding choices and decisions. The HK Code discourages M&Ds from making use of health and child care facilities, and their workers as channels of formula milk promotion. The HK Code therefore discourages M&Ds from:

- offering free supplies of designated products to health and child care facilities,
- donating equipment, gifts or service which may promote the use of a designated product within health and child care facility, and
- promoting or distributing designated products to any person via health and child care facilities, and their workers.

Information and Promotion to Health and Child Care Workers

Product and Product Information to Health and Child Care Workers:

M&Ds may provide products to health and child care workers only for the purpose of professional evaluation or research at the institutional level. They may also provide to health and child care workers scientific and factual information or materials about their products.

Sponsorship and Benefit to Health and Child Care Workers :

M&Ds should not provide any gift or direct benefit to health and child care workers.

Sponsorship of Continuing Medical Education (CME) Activities:

M&Ds should exert no influence on the choice of speakers, topics to be discussed, and choice of sponsorship recipients.

At the venue of the CME activity, M&Ds should not:

- distribute gifts or samples,
- display commercial exhibits of their designated products, and
- provide lavish refreshment.

Labelling

The container or label of a designated product should not:

- (1) include any image, text or other representation that is likely to undermine or discourage breastfeeding, that makes a comparison to breastmilk, or that suggests that the product is nearly equivalent or superior to breastmilk;
- (2) promote bottle feeding;
- (3) convey an endorsement by a professional or other body.

Product labels of formula milk, feeding bottles and teats should clearly state that breastfeeding is the normal means of feeding infants and young children. Product labels of formula milk should also clearly state the need for the advice of a health professional before the use of formula milk and the health hazards of its use.

Product labels should provide clear information for safe use of the product by the public.

Implementation and Evaluation

The HK Code is voluntary in nature and M&Ds are encouraged to follow the principles and aims of the HK Code.

Full text available at www.hkcode.gov.hk (website).

Department of Health
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