

## **Press Release - September 8, 2000**

### **Nestle involved in misinformation to mothers**

In a four-page article on 'New Born Care' that appeared in "Meri Saheli" a Hindi magazine for women (issue August 2000), the information regarding infant has been found to be misleading and scientifically incorrect.

#### **Following are the contents of that article found to be incorrect,**

1. Breastfeeding should be started as early but there is no recommendation for this.
2. It is advised that babies should be exclusively breastfed for 3 months;
3. Breastfeeding be stopped from 6 month to one year when child starts eating other foods;
4. Start giving the other foods when the child is three month old;
5. Problem of not enough milk has been dealt with incorrectly and unscientifically.
6. Mother's milk decreases during sickness;

A careful analysis and examination by the experts at BPNI revealed that the information contained in is contrary to the recommendations on Infant feeding by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, UNICEF, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI), and several other international organizations and experts in the field of child health and nutrition.

#### **The correct recommendations for infant feeding are,**

Breastfeeding should be started within 30-60 minutes after delivery.

Child should be exclusively breastfed for first six months

Breastfeeding should be continued till two years along with appropriate and timely complementary feeding started at the age of 6 months.

Complementary feeding should be started at the age of 6 months with homemade foods.

According to the most updated scientific information mothers who feel that they don't have enough milk are better investigated for the reason of this feeling and then encouraged to breastfeed more frequently to increase breastmilk supply rather than prescribing drugs or other milks. (A baby who gains weight adequately that is about 500 grams a month or passes light colored urine six times a day, is getting enough breastmilk from the mother)

### **Mother's milk does not decrease during sickness.**

This article amounts to misinformation and misguiding the women of India on this issue. Needless to say that women in India should receive accurate and unbiased information on how to feed infants and young children. (According to studies, in India only 50% babies are exclusively breastfed up to three months of age and only 33% infants receive complementary foods at appropriate times). Incorrect information like this can deteriorate the current prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding which can result in increased infant morbidity and mortality and also malnutrition..

Incidentally, almost 50% space in this four-page article is consumed by the advertisement of cereal food "Cerelac" manufactured by Nestle. Most visible images in this article are either of 'Cerelac' or healthy babies. These pages do not bear any numbering; according to some sources in the advertisement section of Meri Saheli, the Nestle has bought these pages.

According to the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 (The IMS Act) the responsibility of such information lies with the publisher as well. And our legal analysis says that advert/article attracts the Section 7 read with the Rules 7 & 9 of the IMS Act.

### **Notes for the editors**

The World Health Assembly adopted the International code of Marketing of Breastmilk substitutes, in 1981 as a "minimum requirement" to be implemented by the Member states "in its entirety". Subsequent World Health assembly resolutions have addressed questions of interpretations and changes in marketing practices and scientific knowledge.

Infant mortality rate (IMR) in India stands at about 70; that means 70 infants out of 1000 live births die by the time they reach one year.

In India half of children under five years are either under weight or stunted in growth.

The IMS Act was enacted in 1992 and came into force in 1993.

The company Nestle faces a criminal prosecution in the court of: Law for violating the labelling provisions (section 6) of the IMS Act.

Section 7 of the IMS Act says that, “ (1) Every educational or other material, whether audio or visual, dealing with pre-natal or post-natal care or with the feeding of an infant and intended to reach pregnant women or mothers of infants shall include clear information relating to –

- (a) the benefits and superiority of breastfeeding;
- (b) the preparation for, and the continuance of, breastfeeding;
- (c) the harmful effects on breast-feeding due to the partial adoption of bottle feeding;
- (d) the difficulties in reverting to breastfeeding of infants after a period of feeding by infant milk substitute;
- (e) the financial and social implications in making use of infant milk substitutes and feeding bottles;
- (f) the health hazards of improper use of infant milk substitutes and feeding bottles;
- (g) such other matters as may be prescribed.

In May 1999 the UK Advertising Standards Authority upheld all of Baby Milk Action’s (Baby Milk Action is a UK based voluntary organization for protecting breastfeeding from commercial influence.) complaints against a Nestle anti-boycott advertisement which the company claimed to market infant formula “ethically and responsibly” Visit BMA website: [www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org)

Dr. Arun Gupta

National Coordinator, BPNI

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is a national network of individuals and organisations working for protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in India. BPNI believes that breastfeeding is the right of all mothers and children. BPNI works through advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education and training of health workers and monitoring the compliance of International Code/The Indian Law to protect breastfeeding. BPNI works as the Regional Focal Point for South Asia for the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) & International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies producing breastmilk substitutes, related equipment and complementary foods or those have been ever found to violate the IMS Act or International Code.