

Make your home a more exciting place to live ▶



Rollover for legal stuff



Covering Women's Issues – Changing Women's Lives

Saturday, March 19, 2011 SIGN IN | SIGN UP FREE! RSS



Search Women's eNews

SEARCH

ARABIC SITE

HOME CULTURE & TRADITION MEDIA PERSPECTIVES & VIEWS POLITICS & INFLUENCE WORK & LABOR JUSTICE HEALTH & SCIENCE SERIES

SISTERSPACE

>HOME >PERSPECTIVES & VIEWS >SISTERSPACE

FDA Formula Probe Is Good News for Mothers, Babies

By Kimberly Seals Allers
WeNews correspondent
Thursday, March 17, 2011

12

Tweet

Like

Share 5



The FDA announced last week that it is planning to look into the health claims of infant formulas. I couldn't be happier. One of the biggest or should I latest of the formula industry's misleading claims is for omega-3 fatty acids--DHA, in particular, which misleads mothers into thinking formula is just as good as breast milk.



Kimberly Seals Allers

Credit: Chandra Lanier

Specifically, the FDA says it wants to: "assess women's understanding of and response to various statements on infant formula labels. The study results will be used to help the agency to understand the role that certain types of statements on infant formula labels have in influencing formula choice...The study will focus on purchase choice, perceived similarity of the formula to breast milk and perceived likelihood that the formula has certain health benefits."

SHARE

This is great news. For years, the infant formula companies have successfully marketed their formulas as just as good as breast milk without any such evidence. This marketing has been particularly aggressive in the black community. In a recent interview, a lactation consultant told me of a mom was asking for "the formula with breast milk in it." Wow!

No such thing actually exists, but it highlights the dangerously successful marketing by deep pocketed formula companies that leave moms confused and about what formula is and isn't.

Having been an intrepid business reporter for many years and a former senior writer at Fortune magazine, I can certainly understand the business dilemma of the formula makers: There is no money to be made from breastfeeding. Plain and simple.

When your number one competition is free, and you can't compete on price, you have to be creative. Really creative. And even misleading.

Meanwhile, market competition pushes formula companies to improve their product by adding so-called nutrients--especially the ones that can be considered "conditional" by the FDA. A conditional nutrient is one that might have some benefits under some circumstances. Even if the health benefits are minimal or questionable, they can still be used in advertising.

More

As a result many formulas have added fatty acids such as omega 6 arachidonic acid (ARA) and omega-3 docosahexaenoic acid--the same ones that are in fish oil. These two fatty acids are naturally present in breast milk and are reported to help infant brain development and vision.

But here's what happened behind the scenes: Formula makers were able to get the FDA to agree that ARA and DHA are normal components of food (which is true) and, therefore, are Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS). They were then free to add ARA and DHA to infant formulas without having to prove that either of them really did anything useful or beneficial. But the mere mention of such additives, gave them breast milk cred. Even worse, instead of marketing formula as a safe alternative if you can't breastfeed, they tried to make it appear just as good as breastfeeding for all mothers.

I mean, why bother to breastfeed if I can give them the same nutrients from formula, a mother could

THE PHRASE WORKING MOTHER IS REDUNDANT

MOMAGENDA

By Allison Stevens

READ MORE >>>



BlogHer Publishing Network



Rollover for legal stuff

Advertise | BlogHer Privacy Policy

- More from BlogHer**
- Tennessee Lawmakers Debate Permitting Women to Breastfeed Babies Over Age One (!)
 - Vetting Men Series #4: Common Values Trumps Race
 - Jay Smooth on MLK's Letter from a Birmingham Jail
 - Smart Technology Can End "Time Poverty" for Women | BlogHer

More from iVillage
Disturbing Kid Videos from Around the Web

black maternal health

SisterSpace



WOMENS eNEWS events

READ MORE >>>



COMMENTOON



SYLVIA

reason. The problem is, you can't.

And it's high time the government stopped allowed deceptive marketing of formula at the cost of infant and maternal health.

If you agree, please join me in letting the FDA know that this study is welcome and long overdue.

You can also file comments at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Refer to Docket No. FDA-2011-N-0098

 [RSS FEED](#)

Would you like to Comment but not sure how? Visit our [help](http://www.womensenews.org/help-making-comments-womens-enevs-stories) page at <http://www.womensenews.org/help-making-comments-womens-enevs-stories>.

Would you like to Send Along a Link of This Story?

<http://www.womensenews.org/story/sisterspace/110318/fda-formula-probe-go...>

[SUBSCRIBE](#) **FREE!** [DONATE](#) 

[PRINT](#) |  [ShareThis](#)

0 COMMENTS | [Login](#) or [Sign Up](#) to post comments

[RELATED STORIES](#)

NO STORIES

 [RSS](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [RESOURCES](#) | [REPRINTS](#) | [ABOUT US](#)

REPRINT FAQS

Copyright © 2011 Women's eNews Inc. All rights reserved.



This women's history month WOMEN'S VOICES asks 'What does women's rights mean to you?' <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/womens-rights/womens-voices/>

