

**Press release:**

**Heinz, Nestle, Abbott: Breaking the rules, misleading mothers**

**New Delhi, July 31:** Baby food giants Heinz, Nestle and Abbott have been blatantly violating the IMS Act, (Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution Act, 1992) and Amendment Act 2003 and misleading mothers and undermining breastfeeding and natural family foods, according to the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) / International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN Asia).

Putting profits before children's health Heinz, for instance is wooing mothers to give its cereal food "Oat and Apple" at '4+ months' through the label on the container and various websites. It is also offering free 'gifts', 'discounts' and even loyalty schemes to mothers for using the website, which is also banned under the law which is not only illegal but unscientific.

According to WHO (SEARO) Regional Advisor of Nutrition Dr Kunal Bagchi "Introducing cereal foods to a child before 6 months of age displaces mother's milk and can lead to serious health risks including diarrhea. Babies should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months".

Nestle uses health claims to promote its baby foods "Nan 1" and "Lactogen 1" through various websites and has tied sales of its "Cerelac Stage 2 Wheat Orange" with baby detergents. The "Nestle Nutrition Institute" is also continuing to organize doctors meetings despite objections from the Government of India.

Abbott meanwhile is using claims of brain development to promote its 'Similac advance infant formula stage 1' for babies up to 6 months of age and "Similac infant formula stage 1" for 0-6 months age.

According to Dr.J.P.Dadhich ,Pediatrician, National Coordinator, BPNI "Misleading mothers should be considered a 'zero tolerance' in the interest of children's health and survival and Government of India should ensure that such violations end sooner."

Similarly, several bottle manufacturers such as *Pigeon, Farlin, Winnie-the-Pooh, Morrison, Baby Dreams and Mee Mee* Feeding Bottles have been selling bottles and cereal foods on discount on e-marketing websites and it is a clear violation of the IMS Act.

The IMS Act, bans all kinds of promotion for 0-2 years of age of baby foods and feeding bottles, including advertisements, inducements on sales, pecuniary benefits to doctors or their associations including sponsorship, commission to salesmen, and prescribes labeling requirements.

According to Yuki Azad, Assistant Professor, Institute of Home Economics, Delhi University and a mother “While attending a workshop during my pregnancy days on labor and delivery organized by my hospital, I was surprised to see promotion of baby feeding products. Such promotions particularly through web and at hospital settings affect the choice of young parents and influence them to adopt artificial feeding which is harmful for babies. In a country like India where clean drinking water is not available, a bottle fed baby is more likely to die of diarrhea and acute respiratory infections than breastfed babies. Why on earth Government of India should allow this?”

World Health Organization(WHO) says “Artificial feeding is an established risk factor for child health like causing more of diarrhea, respiratory or newborn infections, allergies as well as obesity and adult health diseases like diabetes and heart disease.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr. Arun Gupta, Member of the Prime Minister’s Council on India’s Nutrition Challenges, “This is just a tip of the iceberg. It’s high time that the Government of India put effective enforcement machinery in place to monitor and implement IMS Act right at the district level and state level.”

Since violating any provision under IMS Act is a cognizable offence the Government of India should appoint a District and State level officer to monitor, investigate and launch a prosecution against the violator whether it’s an individual or corporation.

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#### **About us:**

BPNI is a registered, independent, non-profit, national organization that works towards protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants & young children registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, s 23144. BPNI does not accept funds or sponsorship of any kind from the companies producing infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles, related equipments, or infant foods (cereal foods). It serves the Regional Coordinating Office of International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) for Asia, which is a network of groups working to promote optimal infant and young child nutrition in over 25 countries. <http://www.bpni.org/>

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/topics/child/nutrition/breastfeeding/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/nutrition/breastfeeding/en/index.html)

### Information Pages:

- Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992, amendment Act 2003(IMS Act)  
<http://wcd.nic.in/IMSAmendact2003.pdf>
- Notification on Infant Milk Substitute  
<http://wcd.nic.in/noto271003.pdf>
- WHO and UNICEF 's Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding ,2003  
<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2003/9241562218.pdf>
- WHO , World Breastfeeding Week 2013 ; Maternal , newborn, child and adolescent health  
[http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/news\\_events/events/2013/world\\_breastfeeding\\_week/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/news_events/events/2013/world_breastfeeding_week/en/index.html)
- National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2004  
<http://wcd.nic.in/nationalguidelines.pdf>
- Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992  
<http://wcd.nic.in/infantmilkpact1.pdf>
- Marketing Offender report, World Breastfeeding Conference 2012  
[http://worldbreastfeedingconference.org/images/marketing\\_offenders.pdf](http://worldbreastfeedingconference.org/images/marketing_offenders.pdf)