

Medela's commitment to the WHO-Code



Every baby deserves the best start in life

Human milk is not only key to a good start in life; it also provides an abundance of lifelong benefits. That is why our destiny at Medela is to enhance mother and baby health through the life-giving benefits of human milk. To fulfil our destiny, we have made it our goal to help every mother feed her baby human milk, everywhere in the world.

Supporting breastfeeding since 1960

We are proud that we have supported breastfeeding and human lactation since 1960, when breastfeeding had become unpopular in many countries. By 1981, the promotion of breast-milk substitutes (infant formula), among other factors, had resulted in historically low breastfeeding rates globally. It was then that the World Health Organization (WHO) created the "International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes" known today as the "WHO Code". Medela has never been, and never will be, associated with infant formula. We have always supported the WHO Code's purpose and will continue to do so.

Breastfeeding is so important to us, that we have invested for decades in breastfeeding and human milk research. Our investment has resulted in powerful new scientific evidence for the amazing value of human milk, and a much better understanding of how to support lactating mothers. We not only use this science to develop superior breastfeeding support solutions, we also invest in sharing this knowledge with the world. We want the world to know that human milk is THE nutrition for babies, and we want to make sure mothers get the help they need to feed it to their babies.

Mothers need practical support

Since 1981, the kind of support that mothers need in order to feed their babies human milk has changed in countries around the world. Many mothers need assistance in order to successfully breastfeed. Many more are separated from their babies for numerous reasons. In countries like the USA and China, mothers must often return to work soon after childbirth. For all those babies to receive the life-giving benefits of human milk, their mothers need practical support. They need a way to express milk (pumps), and they need a practical way to feed expressed milk to their babies.

Our purpose is to help mothers do that, with superior breastfeeding support solutions that include bottles and teats uniquely designed for human milk and breastfeeding babies. With exclusive breastfeeding rates now at only 40% worldwide, any discussion about breastfeeding must acknowledge the real, practical support that mothers in different countries need, to be able to feed their babies life-giving human milk.

Commitment to Compliance

It is well-known that the original purpose of the WHO Code was to stop the inappropriate marketing and distribution of breast-milk substitutes, rather than to prohibit a method of breast milk feeding. While the way babies are fed today has changed since the last century, the most important goal – to give them mother's milk – remains the same. Today, more and more mothers simply have to use bottles and teats to be able to feed their babies mother's milk as long as recommended.

While our feeding solutions are uniquely designed for human milk and breastfeeding babies, they have sometimes been packaged in marketing or promotional materials. In recent years, this has proven challenging for healthcare professionals in some organizations, who wish to uphold the WHO Code in order to best serve mothers and babies. We want to make sure that such challenges do not become counterproductive to our common goal to enhance mother and baby health through the life-giving benefits of human milk. Therefore, while the WHO Code remains in its current form, we are working to ensure that we do not promote our bottles and teats. This way, we can help healthcare professionals to focus on what truly matters: ensuring the best nutrition for babies.

We, too, believe in placing the needs of mothers and babies above all else, honoring the true intent of the WHO Code. By putting mothers and babies first, we stand united with researchers, healthcare professionals, mothers, families, and caregivers around the world, who are doing everything they can to help babies get human milk. We wish to thank all of you who are committed to that, and vow to continue to work with you to give every baby the best possible start in life.

Baar, Switzerland, 2 May 2018



Michael Larsson
President and Delegate of the Board of Directors