



**Websites and
organisations that are
funded by the formula
milk industry**

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Introduction

This short summary outlines some of the websites and organisations that provide information to health professionals which are sponsored by infant milk manufacturers. Information provision by formula milk companies is part of their commercial PR activity. We believe, however, that there is no need for these companies to provide information about anything other than their own products and about how these can be safely used. The cost of PR activities inflates the price of formula milk, which should be a relatively low-cost product given the cost of its ingredients. The WHO *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and many subsequent WHA resolutions aim to ensure that inappropriate marketing and promotion of breastmilk substitutes do not undermine breastfeeding. Weak regulations on the marketing of infant formula and follow-on formula in the EU means that companies are able to provide information about their products on websites, through helplines and parent clubs, and to health professionals in magazines, at conferences, in professional journals and through links with professional bodies. There are frequent examples of how the rules are stretched and broken, and examples of these can be found in the report from Baby Milk Action and the Baby Feeding Law Group – *Look what they're doing!*¹.



The UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative UK produces a very useful report:

[A guide for health workers to working within the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#)

(See

http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Baby_Friendly/Guidance/guide_int_code_health_professionals.pdf?epslanguage=en)

As UNICEF point out in this report:

“The companies often present themselves as philanthropic partners in the fight to protect and improve infant health and health workers may feel reassured by this. In reality, the companies, like all other commercial companies, exist to increase shareholder value by maintaining and increasing profit. For companies manufacturing formula milks or other food for babies this means seeking to sell as much of their product as possible. To do this, they need to persuade parents to formula feed rather than breastfeed and/or to choose their formula milk rather than a competitor’s, and/or to use their brand of baby food as early and as much as possible.”

We strongly recommend that all health workers download a copy of this report and consider their important role in giving information and advice to families, and how they can work within recognised codes of conduct to ensure that they are not unwittingly acting as conduits for formula company marketing messages. For more information about how companies promote their products to healthcare professionals using misleading information see the resource ‘*Scientific and Factual? A review of breastmilk substitute advertising to healthcare professionals*’ available at www.firststepsnutrition.org.

1 Baby Milk Action and Baby Feeding Law Group. 2013. *Look What They're Doing!* Available from <http://www.babymilkaction.org/pdfs/lwtduk2013.pdf>

Commercial companies are not experts in pregnancy, birth or infant and young child feeding, and health workers should be encouraged to use only expert evidence-based information from trusted sources. A list is provided on the next page.

If health workers do want to find out information about a particular product, they can:

1. Find out about the composition of infant milks and whether claims made are in line with current policy in the reports *Infant Milks in the UK: A practical guide for health professionals and Specialised infant milks in the UK: infants 0-6 months* available free at www.firststepsnutrition.org
2. If additional details on the composition and safe use of a particular product are required that cannot be found elsewhere, health workers can look for information on company websites and ask direct questions of company staff.

There is no need for health workers to be *given* information by companies or their representatives, or to attend events that are company-sponsored to gain new information. It is important that health workers do not passively receive information that companies wish to give them, but are active in seeking the particular information that they may need, and are critical of any 'evidence' presented.

Health workers may be surprised to know that:

- If information provided by companies to health workers on their websites, in literature and at study days is not in line with current UK policy and/ or is not scientifically accurate, there is no way of challenging this.
- Claims on infant milks are made for ingredients that are added 'optionally' – that means that they are not seen as necessary for the health and development of infants by those who regulate infant milk composition. These are added primarily to gain market advantage and to suggest that artificial milks can be made to mimic breastmilk, which is not possible.
- Many infant milks which are sold over the counter are Foods for Special Medical Purposes, and these products should only be used under medical supervision. These include comfort milks, anti-reflux milks, lactose-free milks and partially hydrolysed milks. These products are advertised heavily in the health professional literature despite little evidence they are needed, and despite the need for risk assessment, before their use, in most cases.

We believe that company-sponsored websites should not be used as a source of health-related information by health workers, and show some examples of why they may be unhelpful, using examples from health professional focused websites examined between July 2014 and July 2016. We update this report on a rolling basis, but any comments and examples shown have been on company websites recently and are therefore relevant in discussions.

We also include parent sites and information about organisations that are funded, or work in partnership with, formula companies that should be avoided by those who work within the WHO Code.

Who provides independent information on food and nutrition for infants and young children?

Independent information about breastfeeding, infant formula and infant and child nutrition is available from the following organisations and websites:

- **Association of Breastfeeding Mothers** – www.abm.me.uk
- **Best Beginnings** – www.bestbeginnings.org.uk
- **Breastfeeding Network** – www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
- **Feedgood Factor** – www.feedgood.scot
- **First Steps Nutrition Trust** – www.firststepsnutrition.org
- **Health Scotland** – www.healthscotland.com
- **Healthy Start** – www.healthystart.nhs.uk
- **Healthy Start Alliance** – www.healthystartalliance.org
- **HENRY** – www.henry.org.uk
- **Lactation Consultants GB** – www.lcgb.org.uk
- **La Leche League** – www.laleche.org.uk
- **Midwives Information and Resource Service** – www.mdirs.org
- **NCT** – www.nct.org.uk
- **NHS Choices and NHS Information Line** – www.nhs.uk
- **Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland** - www.publichealth.hscni.net
- **Public Health Wales** – www.publichealthwales.nhs.uk
- **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health** - www.rcpch.ac.uk
- **Royal College Midwives** www.rcm.org.uk
- **Scottish Maternal and Early Years** – www.maternal-and-early-years.org.uk
- **Start4life** - www.nhs.uk/start4life
- **UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative** – www.babyfriendly.org.uk

In **England**, **Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England** and the *Eat Better, Start Better* work can be found at: <http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk>

In **Scotland**, **Setting the Table: Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland** is available at:
http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/21130-SettingtheTable_1.pdf

In **Wales**, **Food and Health Guidelines for Early Years and Childcare Settings** can be found at:
www.wales.gov.uk/docs/phhs/publications/foodandhealth/090414guidelinesen.pdf

In **Northern Ireland**, **Nutrition Matters in the Early Years** guidance can be found at:
www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Resources/nutrition/pdfs/nutritionmatters/section1.pdf

Organisations that are sponsored by, or work in partnership with, formula companies

The organisations shown below all work with formula companies in some way or link directly with families to promote products. This list is not exhaustive and we welcome any additions.

Organisation	Website	Company they work with/are funded by
4Children	www.4children.org.uk/Home	The 'Make Space' campaign is run in partnership with Nestlé.
Allergy UK	www.allergyuk.com	Partners include Abbott Nutrition, Aptaclub, Nutricia and Mead Johnson.
Aptaclub	www.aptaclub.co.uk	Parent site for Aptamil products
Cow & Gate baby club	www.cgbabyclub.co.uk	Parent site for Cow & Gate products
Baby Lifeline	http://babylifelinetraining.org.uk	Training courses and awards are supported by Nutricia Early Life Nutrition (Danone).
British Dietetic Association	www.bda.uk.com	Corporate members include Danone, Nutricia, Abbott, Vitaflo, and Nestlé Cereal Partners. Extensive advertising in <i>Dietetics Today</i> and at conferences.
British Nutrition Foundation	www.nutrition.org.uk	Corporate members include Nestlé Nutrition, Danone Waters and Dairies, HJ Heinz and Ella's Kitchen.
Community Health and Learning Foundation	www.chlffoundation.org.uk	Works in partnership with Danone Early Life Nutrition.
Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA)	www.unitetheunion/cphva	<i>Community Practitioner Journal</i> and Conference both accept formula company advertising and input. Educational resources sponsored by Cow & Gate Feeding for Life Foundation.
Early Years Nutrition Partnership	www.eynpartnership.org	A partnership between Danone Early Life Nutrition, The British Nutrition Foundation and the Pre-School Learning Alliance.
Eat like a Champ	www.eatlikeachamp.co.uk	Sponsored by Danone and in association with the British Nutrition Foundation.
Hey! Programme	Run with local councils, 4Children, Barnardo's, Action for Children and the Community Health and Learning Foundation	Project led by Danone Early Life Nutrition.
HiPP Baby Club	www.hipp.co.uk/hipp-baby-club	Parent site for HiPP products
NANNYcare	www.nannycare.co.uk	Parent site for NANNYcare products
Pre-School Learning Alliance	www.pre-school.org.uk	Works in partnership with Danone Baby Nutrition, British Nutrition Foundation (BNF), and the Infant and Toddler Forum (Danone).
Phunky Foods	www.phunkyfoods.co.uk	Funded by Nestlé.
SMA Mums	www.smamums.co.uk	Parent site for SMA products
Toddlebox (Ireland)	www.toddlebox.ie	Funded by Danone Nutricia.

Websites aimed at health professionals included in this review

Name of organisation or website	Website address	Sponsored by
Aptamil Professional	www.aptamilprofessional.co.uk	Aptamil (Danone)
British Specialist Nutrition Association	www.bsna.co.uk	Abbott Nutrition, Danone Baby Nutrition, Mead Johnson Nutrition, Nestlé Health Science, Nestlé Nutrition and Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition
Early Life Nutrition	www.earlylifenutrition.co.uk	Danone Nutricia
Feeding for Life Foundation	Website no longer active, but still offering training.	Cow & Gate (Danone)
Fussy Eaters	www.fussyeaters.co.uk	Abbott
Growing Up Milk Info	www.growingupmilkinfo.com	Danone
Hipp Organic Healthcare Professional Hub	www.hipp4hcps.co.uk	Hipp
In Practice	www.in-practice.co.uk	Cow & Gate (Danone)
Infant & Toddler Forum and Little People's Plates	www.infantandtoddlerforum.org	Nutricia (Danone)
Professional Know-How	www.smahcp.co.uk	SMA (Nestlé)
Vitamin D Mission	www.vitamindmission.co.uk	Cow & Gate (Danone)

Aptamil Professional is an information site for health professionals that provides ‘an online resource for health visitors and allergy management professionals’, offering practical tools, information and resources for breastfeeding, allergy and feeding problems. The site includes sections on how to support mums to breastfeed, information on allergies, information on weaning and some e-learning for pharmacists.

Professionals who have offered expert advice to Aptamil Professional include:

- Rachel De Boer, Dietitian
- Jackie Falconer, Dietitian
- Luise Merino, Dietitian
- Rosan Meyer, Dietitian
- Lisa Waddell, Dietitian
- Carina Venter, Dietitian
- Alison Foster, Public Health Consultant
- Professor David Candy, Consultant Paediatric Gastroenterologist
- Dr Adam Fox, Specialist Paediatric Consultant
- Dr Sue Batterbsy, Author on infant feeding
- Dr Alex Richardson
- Kate Pain, journalist.

Aptamil Professional:

- The literature and material on this website promotes the use of Aptamil branded products, and continues to make a series of claims that are not supported by expert scientific bodies. For example, they continue to make claims for prebiotics such as ‘*Reduces incidence of allergic symptoms including atopic dermatitis*’ and ‘*reduces recurrent upper respiratory tract infections*’ despite expert agreement that the addition of prebiotics is not necessary to infant milks.
- The mix of health professional support and literature and product information is marketing. The site links with the parent support helplines and clubs, promotes a healthcare professional line and literature and uses expert voices to suggest that the information given is all in line with current scientific thinking. Presenting limited evidence to back up and support scientific statements alone without independent review should be perceived as adequate evidence from which health professionals feel comfortable taking advice.

We say:

Health professionals can access policy-based information on all the topics covered on this site elsewhere. The information provided on formula milks is not in line with current Government guidance as there are no recommendations for the use of follow-on formula or growing-up milks for healthy children. Claims made for the efficacy of prebiotics in formula milk are not accepted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and, whilst claims cannot be made on products, claims are still made on the website. Their guidance on introducing solids undermines clear guidance given in policy documents by all health departments in the UK.

The British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA) Ltd is the trade association representing the manufacturers of products designed to meet the nutritional needs of individuals at different lifestages or with specific health requirements. Members include Abbott Nutrition, Danone Baby Nutrition, Mead Johnson Nutrition, Nestlé Health Science, Nestlé Nutrition and Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition.

They have an Infant Nutrition Knowledge Hub as part of their website and professionals who provide information on this site include:

- Judy More, Dietitian
- Gillian Harris, psychologist.

The BSNA say:

“Our website has been developed to provide information for healthcare professionals, regulators, journalists, researchers, parliamentarians and policy makers in the field of health and nutrition.”

Age of weaning – an ongoing debate?

“In 2003, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published advice in partnership with the children’s charity UNICEF recommending exclusive breastfeeding for six months and that weaning or complementary feeding should be delayed until six months of age. The UK’s Department of Health adopted this recommendation and so have some EU States but the majority have not.

Nearly ten years on, the evidence behind the recommendation has been reviewed in some detail and many scientists recommend that since each baby is unique, a single recommendation to wean at six months may not be appropriate.”

“Specialist foods for weaning and beyond are specially tailored for babies and toddlers up to the age of three years. They are nutritionally balanced and undergo extensive quality control throughout the production process to meet the highest standards of quality and safety.”

We say:

The focus of a trade association is to promote the sales of its member organisations. We believe it is inappropriate for a trade association to provide nutrition and health information to health professionals. The information provided undermines the 6 months exclusive breastfeeding message and promotes the idea that specialist baby foods are required and are ‘better’ than home-made foods. The site links to other formula-funded sites such as the Infant & Toddler Forum.

Early Life Nutrition is a resource “for anyone interested in early life nutrition, from pregnancy to pre-school”, and is sponsored by Danone Nutricia. This site provides news, resources and blogs relevant to the topic areas described and promotes its initiative ‘The Big Conversation’ which collected data on parents’ and carers’ opinions on early-life nutrition. One of the statements made from this work was:

“How can we offer parents and carers a trusted guide and partner to help them make the right choices in parenting and in nutrition?”

The key objective of the site is to show how Early Life Nutrition can be that ‘trusted’ partner and to this end it promotes both publicly funded and private Government and other initiatives with which it is or hopes to be associated. Danone Early Life Nutrition sponsors reports from organisations like DEMOS, is a member of the APPG on A Fit and Healthy Childhood and takes part in parliamentary fringe events as a sponsor. This site links to Government websites and to organisations such as the British Nutrition Foundation, Infant & Toddler Forum and the British Dietetic Association, all of which have funding from Danone.

Early Life Nutrition say:

In their ‘Nutrition Manifesto’ (www.danonenutriciaearlylifenutrition.co.uk) Early Life Nutrition hijack the 1,000 days concept and claim that:

“We work to ensure all parents have access to simple and relevant dietary guidelines at all stages during the first 1000 days so allowing them to make appropriate and informed infant feeding choices.”

We say:

We do not need infant formula companies to provide information to parents or health professionals on good nutrition, pregnancy, birth or infant and young child nutrition. This information should only be provided by independent organisations who work together in line with the WHO Code and subsequent resolutions, and in line with agreed UK policy. Danone Nutricia should concentrate on what is their business: providing accurate information on the composition and safety of their products.



Feeding for Life Foundation

(Website no longer active, but still offering training)

The Feeding for Life Foundation is sponsored by Cow & Gate and has a logo very similar to the logo used on Cow & Gate formula milks and foods. It offers information on the website, through a magazine and through early years training e-learning which is accredited by the British Dietetic Association.

The original website and information is no longer available and the website previously available – www.feedingforlifefoundation.co.uk – now links to the Danone Early Life Nutrition and Nutricia websites. Feeding for Life in Ireland (www.feedingforlife.ie) links directly to the Cow & Gate parent website. We have left this in this resource as the name is still used in association with the Feeding for Life nutrition training at CPHVA.

Experts who were involved with the Feeding for Life Foundation (2013) were:

- Professor Pinki Sahota, Professor of Nutrition and Childhood Obesity
- Kathy Cowborough, Dietitian and Public Health Nutritionist
- Professor Marion Hetherington, Professor of Biopsychology
- Dr Julie Lanigan, Specialist Dietitian
- Jacqui Lowdon, Dietitian
- Dr Paraic McGrogan, Consultant, Paediatric Gastroenterologist
- Dr Robert Moy, retired Senior Lecturer in Child Health
- Dr Kate Northstone, Senior Research Fellow at Bristol University
- Dr Mark Porter
- Alison Wall, Health Visitor
- Dr Janet Warren, Diet and Nutrition Team Leader, at Danone Research. (Danone are the parent company of Cow & Gate.)

We say:

The information previously given in the magazine and on the website was generally taken from Government sources and other public health information although there were errors. (For example, the Autumn 2013 edition says women need 500kcal extra per day when breastfeeding.) The Cow & Gate branding was clear and it was surprising that many health professionals were willing to associate their name with an infant formula company. It is not known whether the site and magazine were abandoned because they were unsuccessful in achieving their PR objectives, but the site name is still used in the training available via the CPHVA.



Fussy Eaters – www.fussyeaters.co.uk

The Fussy Eaters website directly supports the use of the Abbott product PaediaSure Shake for fussy eaters, and the website is aimed at both parents and families and health professionals. PaediaSure shake is a sugary milkshake powder that they say can be used for children from 1-11 years of age, recommending two or three 225ml servings a day. The product has been supported by articles on fussy eating in health professional magazines and a 12-step eating plan that they say is devised by a clinical psychologist and dietitian. Experts who appear on the website include:

- Lucy Jones, Dietitian
- Dr Ranj Singh, Doctor
- Dr Netali Levi, Psychologist
- Pixie McKenna, Doctor

Mummy bloggers who contribute testimonials include: Bizzimum.com; Mumknowsbest.com; Mummyneversleeps.com; www.creditcrunchkitchen.blogspot.co.uk; and BeingMrsC.com.

BeingMrsC.com comments:

“We were sent the chocolate flavour to review and taste-wise it's been a big hit, tasting a bit like a chocolate milkshake. I have to say that having the PaediaSure to help me ensure that LMC is really getting everything she needs has helped me relax a bit about them.”

Fussy Eaters say:

“PaediaSure Shake is a delicious drink for children who are fussy eaters. It contains a balance of 26 vitamins and minerals. Especially designed for children, it contains protein, vitamin D and calcium for strong bones, as well as iron to support brain development - all essential nutrients that every child needs to grow and thrive. As a specially formulated nutritional supplement, PaediaSure Shake can fill the gap with essential nutrients that your child misses out on during their fussy eating phase.”

We say:

This is a high sugar product that has no place in the diet of a child. There is no evidence that giving children sweet milkshakes will promote better nutrition in any way, and the product aims to exploit parental anxiety over what are frequently normal episodes of fussy eating in young children. Using the amounts suggested by Abbott, the amount of sugar from the milkshakes alone would exceed the maximum recommended sugar intake for a child at any age. There is no evidence that fortified milk products are beneficial in the diets of children and this has been backed up by a recent European Food Safety Authority report. (See <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3408.htm>)



Growing Up Milk Info – www.growingupmilkinfo.com

(This website is no longer active at July 2016)

Growingupmilkinfo.com was a resource created by Cow & Gate and Aptamil, part of Danone Early Life Nutrition, “for parents who want to find out about their toddlers’ nutritional needs and how using a Growing Up Milk for children aged 1 to 3 years can support their growth and development”.

Expert advice was been provided by:

- Amanda Ursell, Nutritionist
- Johanna Hignett, Nutritionist
- Dr Hilary Jones, GP
- Fiona Faulkner, Toddler Chef.

Dr Carrie Ruxton also provided advice via the European Toddler Nutrition Index work, and Dr Richard Woolfson provided advice on child psychology.

Growing Up Milk Info said:

“We’ve worked very hard, with the help of our fantastic team of parenting and health experts, to create an even bigger and better resource for parents who are looking for information about toddler specific nutritional needs and the role that Growing Up Milk plays.”

“From the age of one, your baby – now officially a toddler – can make the switch from infant formula to Growing Up Milk or cows’ milk. This is a big milestone and another time when mum’s research really matters.”

(To a nutrition expert): “What do you think of Growing Up Milk?”

“I think it’s a valuable and convenient source of key nutrients, which can be particularly useful for fussy or picky eaters who may not be getting all the key nutrients they need. A simple switch from ordinary cows’ milk to Growing Up Milk can make a big difference to the overall nutrient intake in some toddlers.”

We say:

The information given on this website did not support current public health policy or cross-reference to Government guidance.² The meal planner included on the website suggested that children have 300ml of growing-up milk each day and offered menu ideas, but some of the snacks suggested (such as dried fruit, sweet snacks and salty biscuits) do not match current recommendations. The liberal use of fortified drinks may not be of benefit to healthy children. This website did not provide advice in line with current recommendations in the UK. EFSA have recently made a clear statement that there is no need for growing-up milks in the diets of young children. (See <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3408.htm>).

We are pleased this site has been taken down but have left this information here for the present time to demonstrate the changing activities of formula companies.

² Current advice is for all children over 6 months of age who are breastfed, and all those having less than 500ml of formula a day under 1 year of age, as well as all 1-4 year olds, to take Healthy Start vitamin drops.

Using bloggers and parents to 'spread the word' about infant milk products

Some infant milk companies now use bloggers and parents to 'spread the word' about infant milk products. Some examples from Cow & Gate bloggers are shown below.



www.mummyalarm.co.uk:

"Growing Up Milk Info recently invited me along to a blogger event in Bristol's Food Square Foundation and yesterday was the day when I put on an apron and learned how to cook some fantastic home cooked meals for little and not so little ones. The team behind Cow & Gate's Growing Up Milk, which we used in all of the recipes during the day, had invited kids food expert Fiona Faulkner to show us all the tips and tricks a mum needs to transform a meal into a healthy meal that is rich in Vitamin D – something a lot of our meals lack. Growing Up Milk Info have come up with some fabulous infographics and material to help parents and I can't wait to share it with you."

www.mumofthreeboys.com:

"I am very pleased to announce that I have been invited to be a Growing Up Milk Ambassador by Cow & Gate. Even though Oliver is 19 months now I still give him growing up 1-2 years formula milk, there are days where he doesn't have a very good appetite and giving him formula milk gives me that added reassurance that he is receiving the essential nutrients of vitamins and minerals that he needs to grow into a strong healthy boy."

www.missyb-andfamily.com:

"I am very pleased to announce that I have been invited to be a Growing Up Milk Ambassador by Cow & Gate. As a mum of 5 (soon to be 6) I know just how important it is to make sure your children are getting all of the nutrition that they need. It still amazes me just how many calories toddlers use in their day to day lives, and I have recently found out some very interesting facts from a new website that has been designed by Cow & Gate and Aptamil to enable parents to see just how important child nutrition is."

www.madhousefamilyreviews.blogspot.co.uk.

"As a Growing Up Milk Mum-tor, I receive occasional free samples and gifts from Cow & Gate, as well as press releases that I am under no obligation to reproduce on my blog. I choose to publish them if I find them helpful or interesting."

This is an information hub providing product information, helpsheets for health professionals to give to mums, study days, and information on infant feeding, diet in pregnancy and weaning. The section on professional learning resources provides links to papers, published in a magazine (*NHD The Dietitians Magazine*), that are sponsored by HiPP, and which contain an advert for HiPP infant formula. In May 2014 there were links to two papers, one outlining the role of follow-on formula in the provision of iron, and one looking at controversies and issues related to weaning age.

Professionals acting as authors for HiPP-funded articles (May 2014) included:

- Kate Harrod-Wild, Specialist Paediatric Dietitian, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, North Wales
- Emma Coates, Senior Paediatric Dietitian, Wrexham Maelor Hospital, North Wales.

Other health professionals involved in information, study days and webinars include:

- Professor Atul Singhal,
- Juliette Francis
- Carina Venter
- Loraine MacAlister
- Jacqui Lowdon
- Kathryn Lowes
- Christina West
- Berthold Koletzko
- Yvan Vanderplas

Helen Gardiner acts as the nutritionist for HiPP.

Some quotes from sponsored articles include:

From: *Follow-on formula: A useful step forward in the management of iron deficiency:*

“Choosing an appropriate infant formula is not only key to infant growth and development but to ensuring overall nutritional adequacy.”

From: *Infant feeding: current controversies and issues:*

“Vitamin D supplements are needed by all pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, breastfeeding babies and all other babies once they are 6 months.”

From: *A guide for HCP: An introduction to Vitamin D* (elsewhere on the website)

“The Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) for babies younger than six months to allow for growth is 8.5ug /day. Vitamin drops containing vitamin D are recommended for babies and are available on the Healthy Start scheme. Formula-fed babies do not require vitamin drops until milk intake drops below 500ml a day, as this is already fortified. Infants from 6 months and young children: Infants and young children have an RNI of 7ug/day. It is worth considering that young children often do not eat good quantities of vitamin D-containing foods. This is due to the fact that vitamin D rich foods, such as liver and oily fish are often not part of the weaning diet in the UK at this age.”

Despite the removal of probiotics from HiPP formula in 2013 after Department of Health intervention, the section on the website providing information on breastmilk still focuses on probiotics, with clinical studies highlighted in the 'breast milk composition' section related to research reporting that probiotics in formula milk promote good health and reduce infection.

HiPP defends its position on promoting 'weaning' from 4 months, giving significant attention to one published paper which questioned the 6-month recommendation in 2011. In a section on '*Foods: labelling from 4 months*' HiPP outlines the current WHA statement and WHO recommendation on introduction of complementary feeding at 6 months, but then goes on to say:

"HiPP believes that implementation of the WHO resolution in the UK should be appropriate to the UK situation taking into account the individual needs of mothers and babies, both developmental and nutritional. For example, some infants have low iron status and may require the introduction of foods other than breast milk before the age of 6 months, and other infants may need the additional energy provided by the introduction of 'solids' into their diets in order to meet their requirements and to optimize their growth and development."

No references are given to support these statements and this is not current UK guidance from any of the four UK health departments. The UK Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) concluded in 2005 that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is nutritionally adequate, and this underpins policy in the UK.

We say:

HiPP contacted First Steps Nutrition Trust in May 2014 to complain that information about them in this report was out of date, unfair and misleading. They claimed that the information they give is extracted from research or news stories and is approved internally by their team of experts, and refute claims that their website is not fully expert or independent. This resource highlights information we have seen on this website. We would argue that linking health professionals to sponsored articles with product adverts undermines the name 'professional learning resources'. Information on their website is sometimes inaccurate. For example, a website factsheet and a sponsored article on infant feeding relating to vitamin D differ, but neither is correct national policy. Linking to a sponsored article that says "*Choosing an appropriate infant formula is not only key to infant growth and development but to ensuring overall nutritional adequacy*" is untrue, and clearly undermines breastfeeding.

Information on the website about introducing solids is confusing. International and national policy is given but then dismissed. Claims that early introduction of solids enhances nutrition of infants is not supported by research by García et al (2013)³ who concluded that "*The UK infant food market mainly supplies sweet, soft, spoonable foods targeted from age 4 months. The majority of products had energy content similar to breast milk and would not serve the intended purpose of enhancing the nutrient density and diversity of taste and texture in infants' diets.*"

3 García AL et al (2013). Nutritional content of infant commercial weaning foods in the UK. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*: doi:10.1136/archdischild-2012-303386

This Cow & Gate branded website is aimed at health professionals and provides information and resources, podcasts, careline access and information about its products. It previously provided a 'baby feeding product guidance and planogram service' (offering advice on where to put Cow & Gate products on shelves "To maximise your sales in baby feeding"), and a 'milk wizard' for health professionals to help them select the best Cow & Gate product for a baby. The home page currently focuses on linking their advice to NICE guidelines, promoting the idea of prebiotics as a benefit for infant health and linking with their food products.

In Practice say:

"Our aim is to provide Healthcare Professionals with the resources and support they need, when they need it, and to effectively assist their work with parents, through registration to a unique programme designed for and with Healthcare Professionals. In Practice offers a friendly, educational resource to support those Healthcare Professionals who work with parents and babies. Members receive a newsletter, offers on educational items, and priority invitations to events."

"Several nutrients known to improve infant growth and development are routinely included in standard formula milks. Often, the nutrient levels are much higher in formula milks than in breastmilk ..."

"In older infants who continue breastfeeding, it may be useful to recommend mixing follow-on milk with weaning foods (e.g. cereals, custards), to help increase the nutritional quality of the diet."

"Even after a baby's first birthday, cows' milk may not be the best choice for the main drink."

"As a first step intervention, thickened formulas can eliminate or reduce the frequency of reflux issues and in turn help minimise the stress that reflux causes parents" (NICE do not say this and they are misquoting)

"The NICE CKS guidance suggests trialling a hypoallergenic formula as a treatment option for colic²:(This is NOT TRUE – these guidelines say that low lactose and lactose free milks should not be given and do not indicate any other formula as having benefit)

We say:

These are just a few examples of the many ways in which this site undermines breastmilk, breastfeeding and normal infant feeding policy. This site is product-promoting, encourages health professionals to select specific products, and twist or invent wording in guidance from expert bodies such as NICE. Claims are made for prebiotics in milk, despite EFSA ruling that these claims are not substantiated and they constantly quote research that cherry picks evidence to support their products. The website cross-references to the Infant & Toddler Forum but provides no links to Healthy Start or to Start4Life. Cow & Gate also produced the report *Lifting the Lid* to promote its non-organic baby food, and statements from this are discussed on the next page.



Practical help and information
on nutrition and development

This Danone-funded Forum provides resources for health professionals and manages the Little People's Plate project (see the next page). This is a heavily resourced organisation that provides factsheets, videos and resources for health professionals and is ever present at health professional conferences.

Experts who have offered advice to the forum include:

- Professor Atul Singhal, Institute of Child Health
- Dipti Aistrop, Health Visitor
- Dr Robert Coombs, Consultant Neonatologist
- Dr Gill Harris, Psychologist
- Lawrence Weaver, Professor Child Health
- Carolyn Taylor, Health Visitor
- Sukrutha Veerareddy, Consultant Obstetrician
- Gill Perks, Midwife
- Professor Lawrence Weaver, Child Health
- Judy More, Dietitian
- Rosan Meyer, Dietitian
- Carine Venter, Dietitian

The Infant & Toddler Forum say:

"The Infant & Toddler Forum brings together a multi-disciplinary team of experts and practitioners from paediatrics, neonatology, health visiting, dietetics, and child psychology, to share new ideas and to debate the latest thinking in infant and toddler nutrition. Our aim is to identify gaps in current knowledge and areas where information is lacking. We then seek to fill these gaps by providing reliable, evidence-based nutritional information and practical educational tools that are relevant to HCPs' day-to-day practice. Where appropriate, we also engage with professional bodies, policy makers and industry to bring about positive changes to nutritional policy and practice. The Infant & Toddler Forum is supported by an educational grant from Danone Baby Nutrition."

We say:

The Infant & Toddler Forum (ITF) produces a number of factsheets and other resources for health professionals that are mostly in line with current recommendations, although some are now out of date and many use data that is easily available on non-sponsored websites. What the ITF fails to do, however, is to link in with other work relevant to health professionals. For example, there is no link to Healthy Start or Start4Life. It is essential that health professionals have holistic, consistent support which links to other work nationally. There is a strong emphasis on *Feeding Difficulties* (7 factsheets) and *Common Nutrition and Eating Problems* (11 factsheets), which is common in industry-funded information.

Within all the data sheets there is both good information and information that is not current mainstream thinking, and it is difficult for health professionals to distinguish between these. There are some statements that would not be found on independent nutrition websites. For example, they say *"All toddlers should drink full-fat or growing up milk until they are two years old"* despite public health recommendations that whole cows' milk is suitable from 1 year of age for healthy children and an EU statement that growing-up milks are not necessary in the diet of young children <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3408.htm>



This site, managed by the Infant & Toddler Forum, provides Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers, information on the five food groups, a food calculator for analysing toddler diets, information on portion sizes, and advice on toddler feeding time.

Little People's Plates say:

"Feeding a toddler well is a wonderful, challenging responsibility. Little People's Plates is your family's one-stop-shop for practical tips and helpful tools, whether cooking everything yourself or using pre-prepared foods."

We say:

The information provided is similar to general Government and other health information and much of it has been adapted from work done by charities such as The Caroline Walker Trust. However, the food portion size information is not supported with background information to explain how values were derived and without reference to other work it is not holistic for health professionals.

The information provided on the website does not completely support current guidance.

Only vitamins A and D are mentioned as being needed supplementally and there is no mention of the Healthy Start scheme despite its importance. (Healthy Start vitamins contain vitamins A, D and C.) Recommendations are made to provide small amounts of some foods high in salt and fat (such as biscuits, sweets, and crisps) when in fact these foods are not recommended. Formula milks and growing-up milks are suggested for toddlers.

Suggestions for snacks are not in line with current guidance, which says that sweet snacks and fruit juices should not be given as snacks, and that sweetened milks such as drinking chocolate should not be given.

(Inappropriate) high iron snacks suggested⁶

- *Slice of fruitcake or dark ginger cake with a glass of diluted orange juice*
- *Digestive biscuit with a handful of strawberries*
- *Slice of malt bread with a glass of diluted pineapple juice*
- *Drinking chocolate made with follow-on or growing-up milk*
- *Breakfast cereals fortified with iron with milk and half a glass of diluted orange juice"*

⁶ https://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6af67320-7868-42a0-a423-097ccc7630d1&groupId=11528



This is the SMA-sponsored site for health professionals that promotes SMA formula, its own resources, study days, e-learning and professional development. SMA is owned by Nestlé. Professional Know-How also have an SMA milk finder to help health professionals select the 'right' product. This site promotes 'responsive' feeding, the 1000 days agenda and other areas of work it has taken from expert groups. Linking yourself to breastfeeding research and the work of bodies such as I+UNICEF baby friendly gives a halo of professionalism that is totally false. We will review this website in more detail in the next iteration of this report.

Health professionals who are not Nestlé employees who have been involved in recent nutrition-related study days include:

- Maggie Evans, Health Visitor
- Helen Smith, Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Sarah Donohoe, Paediatric Dietitian
- Mhairi Stanley, Paediatric Dietitian
- Eileen Trier, Paediatric Dietitian
- Tanya Wright, Paediatric Dietitian
- James Callaghan, Dietitian
- James Gardner, nurse
- Charlotte Stirling-Reed, Registered Nutritionist
- Dr Julie Lanigan, Institute of Child Health
- Professor Atul Singhal, Institute of Child Health
- Professor Alan Lucas, Institute of Child Health, London
- Dr Jenny Gordon, Royal College of Nursing
- Dr Nick Makwana, Dr Rosemary Thwaites, Dr Peter Dales, Dr Devasmiths Venkataranen, Dr Marie Wheeler, and Dr Bruce McLain: Paediatricians

Professional Know-How say:

"SMA PRO First Infant Milk is an easy to digest, nutritionally complete infant milk with a unique protein profile that is closer to breastmilk and is the only First Infant Milk clinically proven to achieve a growth rate comparable with a breastfed baby" (They have no data from peer-reviewed evidence to support this statement – simply a poster by Nestle employees)

"A Toddler milk can help reassure parents by helping to bridge any nutritional gaps in an active toddler diet."

Previously they claimed *"SMA H.A is clinically proven to reduce the risk of eczema by 50% in at risk infants"*. Now they say *"SMA HA reduces the risk of developing allergy to cows' milk proteins."*

We say:

This site is pernicious in that it steals from other organisations terminology to suggest a connection with them and their agenda, and this promotes the idea that their products are closer to breastmilk. They are currently making claims about SMA PRO that break UK regulations, but sadly no agency will challenge this, and website data is hard to change even when incorrect. Toddler milks are promoted despite no current recommendations in the UK that these milks are appropriate for healthy children. Health professionals can obtain up-to-date advice on infant feeding without attending sponsored study days which promote specific formula milk brands. The claims made about SMA HA are not upheld by current UK policy, and in the US there was a Federal Trade Complaint filed suing Gerber as claims made that its Good Start Gentle Formula (which is a Nestlé product similar to SMA HA) can prevent allergies are considered misleading.



This website claims *“Our mission is to eradicate vitamin D deficiency in all UK children under the age of five. The British weather is robbing your child of vitamin D. However, there are several simple things you can do to help them get all the vitamin D they need: using Fortified Milks, giving a supplement, choosing the right foods, and going out in the sun’.*

The site is sponsored by Cow & Gate, Kelloggs and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust, and provides information for families, a vitamin D calculator and resources for health professionals to download.

Vitamin D Mission say:

“If your child is under 3 years old, fortified formula milk is a handy way to top up their daily vitamin D intake. Formula milk is designed to support the growing nutritional needs of young children. Follow on milk is suitable from 6–24 months, while growing up milk is specially tailored for toddlers from 1–3 years.”

“Few foods naturally contain vitamin D. Good sources of vitamin D-rich foods include oily fish (such as salmon), liver and eggs. But these need to be eaten every day, and often in unsuitably large amounts for your child to get enough. Fortified foods and milks can be included in your child's diet to increase their dietary intake of vitamin D. Just check the nutritional information to see whether a product contains vitamin D.”

We say:

This site does not explain UK policy relating to vitamin drops in infants and young children and promotes fortified milks despite this not being UK health policy. Claims that follow-on milk is suitable from 6-24 months are incorrect and these milks are in fact not recommended at any age. The site uses language specifically taken from Cow & Gate advertising to support the use of this brand of toddler milk. We have written to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS trust to express our dismay that they would involve themselves in this project which is a marketing tool for Cow & Gate and Kelloggs cereals. This site has since been promoted in *Nursery World* magazine, and health professionals should be clear that, despite its part-NHS branding, this is not a suitable information site.



First Steps Nutrition Trust

www.firststepsnutrition.org

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Registered charity number 1146408