

Designed to ease the transition from breast to bottle and back again

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS



Unfortunately current UK marketing regulations do not cover breastpumps or feeding bottles and teats.

However, the *Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations (2007)* do state that “No person shall produce or publish any informational or educational material, whether written or audiovisual, dealing with the feeding of infants and intended to reach pregnant women and mothers of infants and young children, unless that material includes clear information...” The list of information includes “the possible negative effect on breast-feeding of introducing partial bottle-feeding”.

Accordingly, it may be possible for enforcement officers to issue *Improvement Notices* or bring prosecutions over Medela information that promotes its bottles as equivalent to breastfeeding without giving the required information.

. Breaks the Code .

Examples of advertising in the *Breaks the Code - Strengthen the Law* boxes are not permitted under the *International Code* and Resolutions adopted by the World Health Assembly. These measures do cover feeding bottles and teats and state “there should be no advertising or other form of promotion to the general public of products within the scope of this Code”.

Companies should follow these standards independently of national measures, but the specific provisions need to be included in UK law to make them legally binding.

Baby Milk Action has sent this profile to the company and will update it if action is taken.

Contact details for enforcement officers:

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COMPANY HISTORY

All of the 50,000 shares in Medela UK Ltd are directly owned by the private company Medela Holding AG in Switzerland, where Medela was founded in 1961 by Olle Larsson. All his businesses were grouped under the roof of Olle Larsson Holding AG in 2001.

In 2013, Olle Larsson and his sons Michael and Göran transferred part of their family fortune into an independent, charitable foundation. This is called the Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation after Olle and his wife Doris Larsson-Rosenquist (above details from Companies House and company websites).

A Medela press release from 2015 states: “Medela is owned by the Larsson-Rosenquist Family Foundation.”

The UK company had sales of £10.7 million (generating profits of over £800,000) in 2015, the last year for which accounts are available.

ENCOURAGING USE OF BREASTPUMPS

Medela markets breastpumps and feeding bottles. Its promotion of these products is in the context of breastfeeding and the benefits of breastmilk.

Breastpumps are outside the scope of the UK Regulations and the Code. Bottles are covered by the Code.

However, in promoting its breastpumps, Medela undermines the information from NHS Choices, which states:

Some women find it easier to express milk by hand than to use a pump, especially in the first few days or weeks. It also means you won't have to buy or borrow a pump, or rely on an electricity supply.

Hand expressing allows you to encourage milk to flow from a particular part of the breast. This may be useful, for example, if one of the milk ducts in your breast becomes blocked.

Medela does not appear to mention the possibility of hand expressing in any of its information, which might be expected as it has an underlying aim of selling products.

Medela focuses on the benefits of breastmilk, rather than breastfeeding.

It stresses the benefits of pumps in terms of enabling other family members and carers to bottle feed the child.

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FEEDING BOTTLE PROMOTION

Medela promotes *Calma* feeding bottles separately from its breastpumps (as shown right). The name itself is a claim. Medela suggests feeding with the bottle is equivalent to breastfeeding and enables easy transition between breast and bottle feeding.



The Medela Moments blog cites supposed benefits of the *Calma* bottle, but links to reviews by parenting bloggers, not scientific studies.



INTERVIEW: Conquering Breastfeeding Challenges With Calma

June 8, 2012

Like 13 Tweet Pin It

Have you been considering Calma as your breastfeeding solution? See what other moms are saying and learn from their experiences. We interviewed two Calma users whose babies are in different life stages and breastfeeding situations.

While Medela suggests equivalence with breastfeeding, comments on Medela's own website report problems with babies choking using the *Calma* teat. Medela's standard response suggests babies have to learn to suck on the teat differently from how they breastfeed (see a health worker's comment and Medela's response below).

June 9, 2012 at 7:38 am

While I am happy to read that two self-selected respondents did not have problems with the Calma bottle, to date 100% of the clients I have seen who tried this bottle had experienced serious choking episodes.

Reply



Medela says:

June 9, 2012 at 4:27 pm

Hi Susan - We're sorry to hear that your clients' babies didn't immediately take to Calma. We've found sometimes that Calma takes a little getting used to. Typically, babies suck vigorously at the beginning of a feeding to stimulate let down. With Calma, relaxed sucking, similar to the middle of a feeding, works best. Many moms found that after a few tries, babies adjust their sucking at the beginning of the feed with Calma and that Calma helped immensely with the transition from bottle to breast.

Medela's response contradicts the claim used in its marketing: "With *Calma* babies do not have to change their natural behaviour".



SPONSORING PARENTING BLOGGERS

Medela sponsors #medelamum bloggers to review its products and write posts with Medela branding.



Bloggers report receiving products and being sponsored by Medela to attend events, one declaring:

"Medela have paid for my ticket, travel and accomodation for BritMums Live.

"In return I have promised to promote products."

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INFORMATION FOR MOTHERS

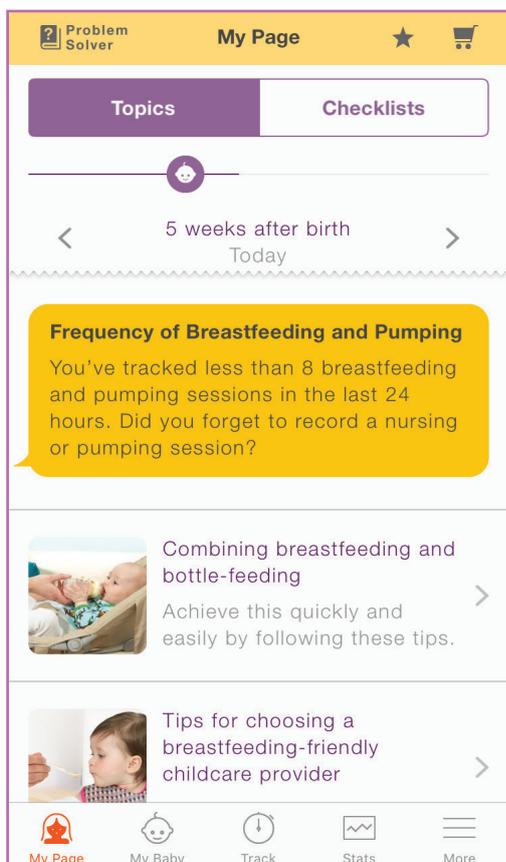
The medela.co.uk website promotes “breast milk feeding”, rather than “breastfeeding”. The information it provides is assessed below.

There is clear information about the benefits of breastfeeding. Mothers are encouraged to use expressed breastmilk rather than formula. Medela states: “No formula can match your breast milk’s unique properties, no matter how many vitamins, minerals and supplements are added to what is, in fact, nothing more than a chemical formulation.”

Its *Frequently Asked Questions* leaflet responds to the question “How often should I feed my baby?” as follows:

“Generally speaking, you will be advised to feed your baby when he is hungry, usually anywhere from 6 to 10/12 times a day. This is called feeding on demand and it is very important for growing your milk supply at the same pace as your baby’s needs increase. Your breastmilk supply will adjust to your baby’s appetite and growth rate.”

The Medela breast milk feeding smartphone app encourages mothers to record every breastfeed, expression, bottle feed and nappy change.



Focusing on measurement lends itself more to feeding known volumes of milk through graduated bottles.

. Breaks the Code .

. Strengthen the Law .

PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Seeking direct and indirect contact to promote feeding bottles is prohibited by the Code. Yet, Medela encourages mothers to join the *Medela Big Breastfeeding Café* event.

This is billed as providing support on breastfeeding, but is also a peer-to-peer marketing activity for the Medela brand of pumps and bottles, inviting mothers to “learn some new tips from those who have experienced breastfeeding and expressing breastmilk first hand”.

It says on the Medela website that on 16 May 2017, “Cafes were held all across the UK with mums in Yorkshire, Norfolk, Nottingham and London, Hertfordshire, Cornwall and many more areas hosting one.”

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TARGETING HEALTH WORKERS

Medela claims it is “No. 1 choice of hospitals and mothers”. It is very much part of the company’s marketing strategy to target hospitals and health workers. The company accounts for 2015 (the latest available) highlight as a risk to its business: “Political change and lack of investment in the National Health Service”.

The company was advertising for a *Business Manager Healthcare - UK* in June 2017. Responsibilities include:

- Develop productive working relationships with Hospitals, Third party distributors and Healthcare professionals as required.
- Maintain and develop clinical relationships with KOLs [Key Opinion Leaders], GPs, Consultants, Healthcare Surgeons and Specialist Nurses.
- Liaise with Medela AG [MAG] to assist in the MAG team visiting customers and setting up clinical work and research trials in new therapy areas.
- Define and execute UK Healthcare regional targets aligned with MAG and in line with the UK Strategy for the year and targeted potential and current high volume customers.
- Develop the UK Healthcare Marketing Plan. Work collaboratively with MAG Marketing to implement an effective strategic plan, develop and propose continuous optimal sales organisation structure to achieve desired market position.