

# Danone

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## Products include:

### FORMULA:

*Blédilait, Alma-Blédilait, Gallia, Actimel, Nursie.*

### COMPLEMENTARY FOODS:

*Blédine, Blédina cereals(8 varieties), Blédina infant juice, Blédine jarred baby food, Blédisoup, Gallia instant cereals, Phosphatine(10 varieties), Zywiec Zdroj bottled water.*



This "Blédine, Second Mother" poster is now a vintage collector's item but one wonders if Blédina's attitude to breastfeeding has changed very much since it published this poster around 1920. (see 2004 website)

The Danone Group was consolidated in 1994 and is now said to be the sixth largest food manufacturer in the world. It is 'big' in yoghurts and biscuits and dominates the mineral water market in several countries. A long chain of acquisitions and mergers led to the Group controlling a great number of older companies. In 1973 Danone - Gervais (Gallia, Bledina) merged with BSN-Evian (Jacquemaire, Fali) and became the leading baby food producer in France. Diépal, Nutripharm, Liga and Vitabis all belong to the Danone Group. Danone markets infant feeding products in other European countries, in Russia, Francophone Africa and in the Middle East.

Little monitoring was done in those regions and this is reflected in the outcome below. Lack of evidence during this period (2001- 2004), does not imply the company is "clean". In France, an October 2001 national monitoring report placed Danone as the worst advertiser, well above Nestlé. These two companies together produced 72 % of all ads for babyfood in France (with 45% by Danone and 27% by Nestlé). In terms of booklets and leaflets, Danone dominated again with 38% while Nestlé took 29%.

The British Medical Journal in January 2003 reported on Code monitoring in Togo and Burkina Faso (West Africa) where it was found that of the 40 commercial breastmilk substitutes that violated labelling provisions of the Code, 21 were manufactured by Danone.

Danone has recently been criticised for its involvement in the EU funded CHOPIN project. This seeks to develop an infant formula which would not pre-dispose the baby to obesity later in life. One of the CHOPIN trial calls for 200 formula-fed and 50 breastfed infants in 5 EU countries. In Belgium and Germany the researchers could not find enough formula-fed babies! Bledina is experimenting on these babies with new formulations of baby milks (www.childhood-obesity.org). Eighty percent of the Programme is publicly funded (EU) while Danone funds less than 20% but clearly sees opportunities for future marketing.

## Promotion to the public

► *Article 5.1 of the Code prohibits advertising and all other forms of promotion of products under the scope of the Code.*

- The Blédina website "Pas à pas, bébé grandit avec Blédina" (step by step, baby grows up with Blédina) features a message from a "Doctor in Nutrition" who says that "If you chose to bottle feed your baby, you know that the composition of



Blédina website features packshots and a baby bottle feeding (see next page).

infant formula is close to mother's milk". A movie clip on the website shows a busy mother bottle feeding her baby.



- On the same website, Blédina implies equivalence between its products and breastfeeding: "during the first four months breastmilk and babymilk are the only foods adapted to the baby's young and immature digestive system. They satisfy his nutrition needs perfectly...". A separate paragraph acknowledges that breastfeeding is the best way to nourish the baby...but immediately warns the mother that she has to feed herself with utmost care to have quality milk - no coffee, alcohol or other stimulants and "to keep beautiful breasts, mother must wear a special bra day and night" and finally: "Weaning is the transition from breastmilk to babymilk..."

- In Burkina Faso, **Blédine** jarred baby food, **Blédisoup**, **Blédina** juice and **Gallia** instant cereals are all recommended from 4 months and mostly by feeding bottle.

▶ **WHA Resolution 54.2 (2001)** advises exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months which means that the recommended age for use of complementary foods cannot be under 6 months.

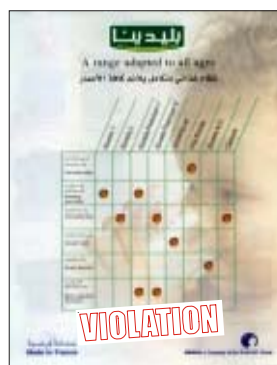
### Promotion in health facilities

- For health professionals, **Article 7.2** of the Code only allows product information which is factual and scientific.
- Article 6.3** prohibits the display of products, placards and posters or the distribution of company materials.
- WHA Resolution 47.5 (1994)** urges an end to free or subsidised donations of products to all parts of the health care system.

- In Costa Rica, a Danone **Actimel** leaflet found at a paediatrics congress claims that the product has the "efficiency of fermented milks or acidolactic bacteria in fermented milks for prevention and treatment of infant diarrhea". It is recommended for infants from three months.

- In Togo, one health facility displayed a large calendar with pictures of mothers and their infants, a teddy bear, and the legend "Danone Baby Food"

- A Blédina leaflet in a United Arab Emirates (UAE) hospital shows a chart recommending **Blédina** products for low-birth-weight, acute diarrhoea, minor di-



gestive disorders and ... from birth! There is no mention at all about breastfeeding. Flipside shows Blédina products with packshots: **Nursie** formula for 0-6 months and cereals from the fourth month.

◀ This Blédina chart recommends everything for baby except breastmilk.

- Also in the UAE, Blédina distributes a leaflet "For a Healthy Growth" to health workers showing packshots of the **Nursie** range of 6 formulas for ages 0-6 months and cereals for ages from 4 months.



▲ Check boxes below each product make it easy for the doctor to tick and pass to the mother.



- Ready-to-feed **Nursie** bottles for newborns are donated to maternities in the UAE.

### Labelling

▶ **Article 9** of the Code requires labels to NOT discourage breastfeeding and to inform about the correct use of the product and the risk of misuse.

- In France, the label on **Blédina** infant juice claims that the product "contains water, to hydrate" and recommends that the product be used for babies from four months. The label also advises that the product be used "day to day to ensure the nutritional balance of the baby", wrongly implying that breastmilk is insufficient for that purpose during baby's first months.

- Zywiec Zdroj**, a mineral water in Poland controlled by Danone shows a happy, healthy mother and baby, implying the water is to be used for bottle feeding.

