

Gerber

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Products include:

COMPLEMENTARY FOODS:

Gerber vegetable, fruit, meat or fish purees, Gerber cereals, Gerber juices, Gerber bottled water.

GERBER FEEDING BOTTLES AND TEATS.

Logos & Icons:

Gerber's website has a story of the woman whose face as a baby became an icon for the company in 1928 and the official trademark in 1931.



"The logo is the essence of who we are," said a vice president for Gerber North America. "It is the epitome of a happy, healthy baby and the symbol of trust we have with parents. It's everything to our company."

Advertising expert, Professor Jim Twitchell agrees: "There could be better baby foods, but if you own the concept of the beautiful baby, then you're golden. And that's what Gerber owns, and it just made mincemeat out of all its competitors, and I think it was primarily because of what was on that label".

In 1994, the Gerber Products company merged with Sandoz and then became part of Novartis, a Swiss giant in pharmaceuticals, veterinary products and a leading producer of genetically modified seeds. Gerber, however, keeps its own profile, particularly with its famous baby face which appears on all its labels often together with the slogan: "*Shouldn't your baby be a Gerber baby?*"

Gerber controls between 60% to 90% of the US and Central America baby food markets. Its biggest rival in Europe and Southeast Asia is Heinz. Gerber has recently launched into China in a very aggressive way. Like elsewhere, the baby face is very prominent.

The Gerber baby face has also meant trouble. When Guatemala banned baby pictures on labels and refused to register new Gerber products in 1993, the case went to the Supreme Court. Guatemala was brave but had to buckle under in the face of the combined clout of company lawyers and US government pressure. Brazil, however, is a bigger fish and Gerber wisely chose not to challenge its strict labelling laws but to sacrifice its baby face at the prospect of breaking into the huge new market, dominated by Nestlé. Both companies now abide by Brazil's strict labelling laws and dutifully put on their complementary food labels: "*Breastfeeding must be maintained after introducing new foods into the child's diet, until 2 years or beyond. This product must not be used for feeding infants during the first 6 months of life, except upon advice of a doctor or nutritionist*".

Gerber is pushing product exposure through creative new ways such as contracting the Brazilian Outback restaurant chain to give free Gerber jars and juices to travelling babies while their parents enjoy a steak and a break.

With rising opposition to genetically modified ingredients, Gerber announced in 1999 that it would eliminate GM ingredients from all its products worldwide. Greenpeace and other campaigners rejoiced but in 2001, Greenpeace test results showed that Gerber used genetically engineered soya in its baby food products in the Philippines. The irony is obvious: how can a subsidiary of Novartis which spends millions on promoting GM seeds as safe, turn around and ask farmers to deliver non-GM ingredients for its own baby food?

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.

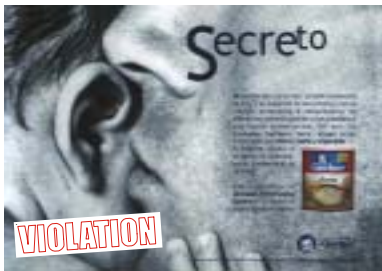
- Gerber's 75th anniversary was advertised as the "*Forever Young*" campaign in Trinidad's *Guardian* newspaper, on the radio and in leaflets. Two main promotions were announced: anyone who buys two or three Gerber products can win prizes such as baby clothes and can also enter the Anniversary Sweepstakes for US\$1,000 in cash or hampers. Gerber feeding plans and car stick-

ers were freely handed out.▶

Note: The “Forever Young” campaign was suspended and then modified after complaints by TIBS of Trinidad and Tobago – an IBFAN group.



- An advertisement in a parents’ magazine in Costa Rica promotes Gerber’s fortified food products for use after three months and states: “Around the fourth month your baby will recognise your voice...with time he will learn how to relate in various ways... thanks to good feeding”.



- Also in Costa Rica, Gerber gives out pocket diaries that say on the cover: “The only thing we cannot give is mother’s love ... All the rest, Gerber gives”▶



- A Gerber cereal advertisement in a Venezuelan magazine asks “Do you need a crèche?” and announces a competition to win a place in a crèche with the purchase of Gerber foods.
- The Gerber website promotes its baby foods, Gerber baby water and other products with baby pictures, packshots and slogans: “Shouldn’t your baby be a Gerber baby?” and “Join the Gerber Family”.



Promotion at point-of-sale

▶ **Article 5.3 of the Code bans promotional devices at the retail level.**

- A leaflet in a Shanghai supermarket promotes Gerber vegetable purees as “1st and 2nd Foods” without specific age recommendations. The baby is wearing a maternity wristband, suggesting the product may be suitable from birth.
- In pharmacies in Costa Rica, Gerber displays posters inviting mothers to enter a lucky draw when they buy Gerber products. Winners receive monthly pocket money for varying periods of time.
- Gerber uses tie-in sales at a supermarket in the Dominican Republic to promote their fruit purees.
- Gerber distributes a leaflet *Feeding plan – Gerber Steps* in Dominican Republic supermarkets that promotes *First Step* products for use from 4 months.
- In Mexico Gerber offers up to 30% discount on its products.
- A leaflet in a Beijing supermarket offers gifts with purchases of Gerber products during the company’s 75th anniversary celebrations. A form, to be filled in and sent to Gerber facilitates future contact.



Front of leaflet

Flipside of leaflet

- In a leaflet in the same Beijing supermarket, Gerber asks: “Smart mother - have you prepared well? Are you ready?” The leaflet recommends Gerber purees after three months, juices from two months and Gerber spring water for bottle feeding.



- Gifts are offered with Gerber purchases in Peru, Malaysia and Thailand. ►



- Gerber puts up special displays in Uruguay shops to encourage sales.
- Shelf talkers and special displays promote Gerber products in Indonesian supermarkets.

- A “*First Step*” leaflet in a Mexican supermarket promotes **Gerber vegetable/meat/fruit purees** from four months: “*According to modern infant nutrition practices, it is possible to introduce complementary foods as soon as your baby needs additional calories, following his physical development rather than his chronological age.*” The leaflet features a crawling baby with packshots of purees and rice cereals.

- Also in Mexico a free jar of **Gerber pear puree** is given with the purchase of one set of products - one jar each of apple, carrots, and rice cereal plus two teats for newborns - all of which are marked “*First Step*” without a recommended age of use.



Gerber’s special offer in Mexico includes teats for newborns and complementary foods.

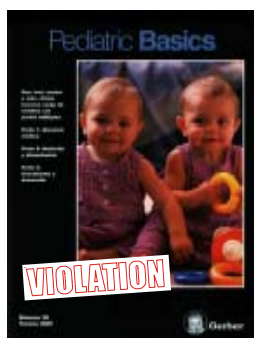
- In a UAE supermarket display of the range of Gerber products, brand name and logo are shown on all sides. This picture tops the display and also appears as an advertisement in a local newspaper.



Promotion in health facilities

► **Article 6.2** bans the promotion of products within the health care system.

- A Gerber publication in a doctor’s office in Costa Rica bears the company logo on each page and features two happy babies on the front cover. The back cover lists Gerber contacts. ►

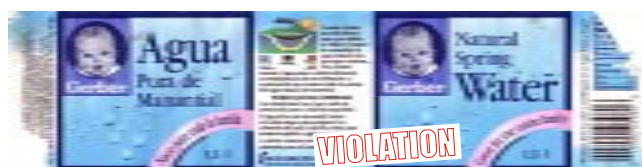


- In China Gerber products and posters are put in hospital display windows.
- Gerber items are also displayed in health facilities in Thailand and the Dominican Republic.

Labelling

► **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.

- All of Gerber’s labels (except in Brazil) violate the Code because of the baby face logo and because its **First Foods** are recommended from four months. In Brazil, Gerber follows the law and its labels say: not before six months.
- **Gerber Oatmeal** labels in the United States say “*the American Academy of Paediatrics(AAP) recommends supplementing baby’s diet with iron beginning at 4 to 6 months*” and that the product supplies the iron needed by infants. This implies endorsement by the AAP, which in fact recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months.
- **Gerber spring water** labels in Costa Rica encourage early complementary feeding, saying the product is ideal for preparing porridges, juices and cereals, which Gerber markets for use from three months.



Misleading text and pictures which violate the Code

- In a Singapore *Motherhood* advertisement, Gerber says: “*From 4-6 months, a milk diet alone is insufficient*”.

- This ad in *The Star* newspaper in Malaysia invites parents to fill in a coupon (which gives the company addresses for direct promotion) to receive a free sample of **Gerber Rice Cereal**. The ad promises a reduced price for two **Gerber Rice cereals** and encourages mothers to go for early complementary feeding; mothers are left to decide when it’s “*high time*”. The age recommendation on several small packshots is not readable.

