

Will EU ban on baby bottles with Bisphenol A lead to dumping in developing countries?

IBFAN, the International Baby Food Action Network (1), reports an increase in global promotion of plastic baby bottles. *“Manufacturers are using cunning promotional tricks to create lucrative markets for feeding bottles in countries beyond the EU and US. Are these companies trying to get rid of their stocks of bottles in developing countries before the EU ban comes into force?”* asks Ines Fernandez, Coordinator of IBFAN South East Asia.

IBFAN works globally to protect babies' health from the risks of bottle-feeding (2). Polycarbonate baby bottles contain the chemical Bisphenol A, BPA, a chemical that acts as a hormone disruptor and can thus impair the development of the immune, neural and reproductive systems in young children.

Canada has officially declared BPA a toxic substance because of its adverse effects on human health and the environment. Six US manufacturers are removing BPA from bottles sold in the US, but not from other markets. The European Union has announced a ban starting from March 2011 on manufacturing plastic baby feeding bottles with BPA (3).

Developing countries are a potentially large market for manufacturers of baby feeding bottles. Yet in developing countries there is the greatest risk to babies of disease and death caused by microbes in contaminated feeding bottles that are hard to clean and sterilise. The risk of chemical contamination by BPA is added to this risk of bacterial contamination.

The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes was adopted in 1981 by the world's health authorities, with its subsequent resolutions, to protect vulnerable infants against these risks (4). Feeding bottles and teats or nipples are covered by the International Code, which bans advertising and other forms of promotion to the general public and through health professionals.

Despite the provisions of the International Code, IBFAN groups report intensified promotion on the internet using outrageous claims. Says Dr. Khalid Iqbal, Coordinator of IBFAN in the Gulf Region *“One brand of feeding bottles has the slogan “It's a natural!”, yet nothing could be less natural than plastic feeding bottles containing BPA.”*

Such direct promotion to the public is prohibited by the International Code, yet according to Dr. Balkees Majeed, Paediatrician *“In my country, Malaysia, one company promotes its plastic baby bottles using a popular film star: a national newspaper carried a photo of the star feeding her baby using this brand of bottle”.*

These misguided attempts to glamorize plastic baby bottles can jeopardize the healthy growth and development of babies all over the world. Parents should avoid using plastic feeding bottles (5) and be supported in optimal breastfeeding, as recommended by WHO (6).

André Nikiema, Coordinator of IBFAN Africa, explains: *“Mothers who breastfeed exclusively provide significant health benefits to their baby. Parents and carers need to assess the risks of bottle-feeding and the benefits of breastfeeding, free from the pressures of commercial interests, in order to make informed decisions to protect their babies' health.”*

Notes:

1. IBFAN counts members in over 100 countries, made up of concerned groups and individuals, including health professionals. All work together to protect, promote and support breastfeeding and to guarantee every child's right to the highest attainable standard of health: www.ibfan.org
2. IBFAN's global working group on bacterial and chemical contamination of baby milks and foods and infant feeding products works to inform parents, carers and health professionals of the risks of artificial feeding using industrially produced baby milks, polycarbonate plastic feeding bottles and teats (nipples):
http://www.ibfan.org/article-artificial_food_bisphenol.html and Stop Press:
http://www.ibfan.org/parents_20110119.html
3. Canada and France have already banned BPA in baby feeding bottles and Denmark has outlawed it from all packaging materials for foods for babies under 3 years old.
4. To increase every child's chance of survival and healthy growth and development, the World Health Assembly, WHA, adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and 14 subsequent, relevant resolutions, the most recent in 2010: http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/code_english.pdf Articles 5.1 and 6.2 of the International Code apply to infant formula, all breastmilk substitutes and bottles and teats.
5. Some plastic feeding products have the recycling triangle with the number 7 inside the arrows, or the letters PC. Glass feeding bottles are available to avoid using plastic.
6. For optimal growth, development and health of babies, and important implications for the health of their mothers, the World Health Organization, WHO, recommends early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for six months, followed by the addition of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to 2 years of age or beyond (WHA resolution 55.25).

About Us

The International Baby Food Action Network, **IBFAN**, consists of public interest groups working around the world to reduce infant and young child morbidity and mortality. IBFAN aims to improve the health and well-being of babies and young children, their mothers and their families through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and optimal infant feeding practices. IBFAN works for universal and full implementation of the [International Code](#) and Resolutions.