



Letter to Store Manager

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Dear [Store Manager's Name],

As a regular customer, I have become aware that gift packs containing infant formula are being distributed to expectant and new mothers visiting your store. The World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions prohibits the distribution of free samples in order to protect a mother's choice to breastfeed. Endorsed by the government of Canada, the Code holds manufacturers and distributors of infant formulas and baby foods responsible for abiding by its provisions. Specifically,

**“Manufacturers and distributors should not provide, directly or indirectly, to pregnant women, mothers or members of their families, samples of products within the scope of this Code.”
(Article 5.2)**

The aim of the International Code is to remove commercial pressure to formula feed and to protect against the distribution of biased information to pregnant women and new mothers.

This is not a trivial issue of maternal choice. Formula fed babies are at increased risk of childhood cancer, asthma, ear and respiratory infections, allergies, diabetes and gastrointestinal infections. Formula fed babies also score lower on intelligence and vocabulary tests than their breastfed counterparts. As formula fed babies grow into adults, they are at greater risk for cardiovascular disease and obesity. For the mother, not breastfeeding means higher risk of breast, ovarian and other cancers.

It is because of these health risks as well as the increased risk of death during the postneonatal period (a recent study notes 21 per cent higher postneonatal mortality for formula fed infants in the US) that compliance to the International Code is important. I am quite sure that you want to support mothers to do what's best for their babies and help create a supportive environment that encourages breastfeeding and meets your store's obligations to comply with the International Code.

“Independent of any other measures taken for implementation of this Code, manufacturers and distributors of products within the scope of this Code should regard themselves as responsible for monitoring their marketing practices according to the principles and aims of this Code, and for taking steps to ensure that their conduct at every level conforms to them.” (Article 11.3)

I do wish to remain a customer of your store; however, if you continue to be disrespectful of the rights of breastfeeding mothers and babies, continue to use your facilities to sabotage a mother's choice to breastfeed, and do not meet your obligations under the International Code, I will take my business elsewhere.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

cc: Hon. Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Health
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