

## **Differences in the composition of breast milk and industrially produced infant formula and follow-on formula and their effects on the health of infants**

Opinion of the National Breastfeeding Committee, 16 July 2012

Industrially manufactured infant formula products must be adapted to the nutritional requirements of healthy infants and substantiated by generally recognised scientific data. When advertising these products, manufacturers often directly or indirectly claim that the composition of their product is comparable to breast milk. The National Breastfeeding Committee at the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has compared the composition of breast milk to industrially manufactured infant formulae and assessed the effects of the different types of products on the health of babies.

Breast milk contains numerous substances which are not contained in infant and follow-on formula. These substances lower the probability of breastfed babies falling ill. Exclusive breastfeeding in the first 4 to 6 months reduces the number of infections in infants by 40 to 70 % and lowers hospital admissions during the first year of a baby's life by more than 50 %. For example, breastfeeding reduces the risk of infections of the lower respiratory tract in babies by over 70 %. Other illnesses which are found less often in breastfed babies are otitis media, gastrointestinal infections as well as possibly overweight and diabetes mellitus Type 2 later in life.

Breast milk is the ideal food in the first months of an infant's life. It is easy to digest and composed in such a way that all the baby's nutritional and fluid requirements are met during the first half-year of life. Advertising for infant formula should therefore not create the impression that formula is just as good or even better for babies than breast milk.

The National Breastfeeding Committee concludes that the composition of breast milk is unique and that it cannot be imitated by industrially manufactured infant formula. Advertisements which create the impression that industrially manufactured infant formula is equal or equal in some respects to breast milk can, in the opinion of the National Breastfeeding Committee, be seen as misleading. The BfR supports the National Breastfeeding Committee in this assessment.

The full version of this Opinion is available in German on  
<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/unterschiede-in-der-zusammensetzung-von-muttermilch-und-industriell-hergestellter-saeuglingsanfangs-und-folgenahrung.pdf>