

April 2013

DSM position on infant formula

Key messages

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; it is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers. Review of evidence has shown that, on a population basis, exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is the optimal way of feeding infants.¹

For many reasons, however, not every infant will be fed breast milk exclusively for 6 months. Indeed, some mothers choose not to breastfeed; some mothers may breastfeed only part of the time and a small percentage perhaps cannot breastfeed their babies.

Infant formula, although it can never equal breast milk, is formulated in an attempt to ensure that the most nutritionally complete substitute possible is made available for babies who are not breastfed. As infants are a particularly vulnerable group, it is essential that foods for infants are governed by strictest standards and that these standards are subject to regular evidence-based review. DSM applies globally determined standards rigorously to all of its ingredients sold to infant nutrition producers. DSM also works in close cooperation with healthcare professionals and scientists to ensure that children who are not breastfed have access to quality nutrition during the first months of life.

The infant formula industry continually assesses the actual composition of breast milk and so strives to improve the quality of infant formula as new science becomes available. Breast milk sets the nutritional standard for feeding infants around the world. It is the responsibility of government authorities to ensure, in cooperation with academia and industry, that infant formula is designed to meet as many of the properties of human breast milk as possible and that the marketing of infant formula does not undermine the global recommendation that infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life.

What is infant formula?

For infants who are not breast-fed, infant formula is the only accepted product for feeding healthy babies up to six months, as defined by Codex Alimentarius (the international body that establishes recognized standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations relating to foods, food production and food safety).

Formula for special medical purposes intended for infants is specifically designed for infants with metabolic or digestive disorders, or with a very low birth weight.

DSM and infant formula

DSM manufactures a wide range of vitamins, blends and nutritional lipids that can be used in infant formula but also in infant cereals, fruit and vegetable juices, biscuits and baby meals as well as supplements and foods for maternal nutrition.

¹ WHO, http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/exclusive_breastfeeding/en/



DSM is the world's leading manufacturer of vegetarian sourced DHA and ARA. Naturally present in breast milk, DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and ARA (arachidonic acid) are two long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LC-PUFAs) that are important for optimal infant nutrition due to their role in brain and eye development.

DSM and the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes

DSM supports the World Health Organization's efforts to promote breastfeeding. The aim of the WHO Code is "to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of breastfeeding, and by ensuring the proper use of breast milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution." DSM endorses WHO and other organizations that promote breastfeeding and believes that breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants and is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers.

A long history of research and innovation

Advancements in infant formula are the result of decades of research and dedication to nutritional science. This research has led to important breakthroughs that make infant formula the best possible option after breast milk but we acknowledge that infant formula can never equate to breast milk as being best for infants. New science has enabled the development of a wide range of specialized infant formula products that provide premature babies, and babies with challenging nutritional problems who are not exclusively breastfed, the sustenance to survive and thrive.

The way ahead

Infant formula remains the most highly regulated food in the world. There is agreement in the international scientific and pediatric community that the formulation of dietary products for infants must be based on sound evidence and infant formula must always be demonstrated to be safe. DSM believes that any new legislation in this field needs to guarantee the highest degree of protection of vulnerable consumers as well as legal certainty and reliable approval procedures for new innovative substances.