

80% of baby formula sold in the United States comes from major pharmaceutical companies.

Pharmaceutical companies use hospitals to market formula because the practice implies that doctors and hospitals endorse not only formula-feeding in general, but their brand in particular. They use hospital-distributed commercial discharge bags to advertise their product directly to new mothers as they leave the hospital.

Research shows that mothers who receive commercial discharge bags are more likely to start using formula. The effect is so dramatic that it is seen even when the bags do not contain formula samples.

The commercial discharge bags market the most expensive brands of formula, which hurts formula-feeding families as well. There is evidence that the marketing fosters brand loyalty: families continue to use the brand they were given in the hospital. Each of these bags costs the companies less than \$7, but a year of name-brand formula costs parents up to \$2,000, a significant portion of which pays for marketing. As a result, families pay at least an extra \$700 per year for name-brand formula as compared to store brands.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO), along with many other public health organizations, recommend that mothers breastfeed their babies exclusively for six months and continue to breastfeed with the addition of complementary foods for at least the first year.

Mothers who use formula instead of breastfeeding face increased risks of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Children who are formula-fed have higher rates of many infant infections, as well as chronic diseases such as type 1 diabetes, leukemia and lymphoma, and obesity. The benefits of breastfeeding are dose-related; the more breastmilk a baby receives, the greater the protection for both mother and baby.

Studies suggest that infants who are not breastfed have significantly higher health care costs, something the Commonwealth cannot afford in this era of health care reform. Formula feeding costs tax payers by increasing expenses for MassHealth and WIC food benefits. A 2001 report from the US Department of Agriculture estimates that the US could save at least \$3.6 billion in annual health care costs if breastfeeding rates rose to the levels recommended by the Surgeon General.

Research shows that mothers who formula-feed have three times as many one-day absences from work to care for sick children as do breastfeeding mothers. Other research estimates that one year of sick time could be saved for every thousand babies breastfed instead of formula-fed.

Many organizations oppose hospital distribution of commercial discharge bags, including the AAP; the AAFP; District I of ACOG; the Centers for Disease Control; the WHO; the Massachusetts Medical Society; and the Massachusetts Public Health Association. The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently spoke out against this specific practice, defining it as marketing, and the 2000 Surgeon General's report also condemned it.