
Submission no. 352

AUTHORISED: 23/5/07 MC

To Mr Somlyay

I am avidly following the current inquiry into breastfeeding. Whilst walking through our supermarket baby food aisle I was rather annoyed that Heinz still labels their baby tins from 4-6 months, despite WHO standards and most child health centres recommending exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months so I wrote them this on their website feedback over the weekend.

"I am very disappointed that Heinz contradicts the World Health Organization recommended standards that exclusive breastfeeding should be maintained by infants until six months of age. I have chosen not to buy any Heinz products from now on for my entire family because of this stance. Other Australian companies such as Golden Circle are happy to label their baby food products from 6 months. I will be informing my friends and family about this incorrect labelling and marketing by the Heinz company and hopefully they too will vote with their wallets. Hopefully Heinz will take strong note of outcomes reached by the Inquiry Into Breastfeeding. "

I received the following response today

Subject: RE: HEINZ For Baby - Contact Us Form
From: "HWA Consumer Support" <HWA.Consumer@au.hjheinz.com>
To: <karinnt@bigpond.net.au>

Dear Karin,

Thanks for your email.

We are well aware of the labelling requirements in Australia. Our labels comply with the Food Standards Code (Australia's food regulations), as they are required to. The NHMRC "Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents" states quite clearly, that starting solids is recommended at "around 6 months". Page 291 of the NHMRC document states: "Recommendation Introduce solid foods at around 6 months, to meet the infant's increasing nutritional and developmental needs"

In Heinz view, this recommendation is a practical one that allows mother's to introduce solids when her baby is

developmentally ready, not based solely on chronological age. Our labels not only meet the legal standard required of us, but provide a range of suitable ages (4-6 months) for mother's to choose safely from, as outlined in the NHMRC Guidelines. All of our educational materials reinforce the importance of breastfeeding, and the introduction of solids when baby is ready. We point out very clearly, that there is no point introducing solids before baby is ready. You will find our "When its time to eat" brochure which outlines this in detail on our website www.heinzforbaby.com

We are disappointed that you are not happy to use our foods based on your incorrect understanding of the NHMRC guidelines. I hope that this information improves your understanding that our marketing practice is both legal and responsible, and that your boycott of our products is not based on correct information.

Regards
Heinz Forbaby Team

I have found Heinz response quite bemusing as the difference between "around 6 months" recommendation and the 4-6 month labelling of their products just doesn't make any sense to me or seem to fit the interpretation of the NHRMC guidelines but apparently I am misinterpreting this?

My stroll down the baby feeding aisle found that Heinz appear to be the only company still persisting with this 4-6 month labelling. Their website also is laid out with "choose your baby's age" and then these are the products we have to offer you style which I think encourages feeding infants breastmilk substitutes early.

Anyhow I thought this might interest you in your current position

Regards

Karin Thorp
Darwin