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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED BAN ON FORMULA MARKETING BY HOSPITALS

**Q:** *What does the pharmaceutical industry have to do with baby formula?*

**A:** About 80% of baby formula in the US is sold by pharmaceutical companies.

**Q:** *Does the ban mean there would be no formula in hospitals?*

**A:** No. The hospitals will still provide formula to mothers who do not want to breastfeed.

**Q:** *Does the ban pressure women to breastfeed?*

**A:** The ban does not affect a mother's right to choose how she feeds her baby. It only affects marketing of formula by hospitals.

**Q:** *Does this mean a breastfeeding mom won't be able to offer formula to her baby?*

**A:** No, any mother can give formula if she wants to.

**Q:** *What if a mother does not want to breastfeed at all?*

**A:** A mother's feeding choice will be supported, regardless of what she chooses. Feeding choice should be an informed decision, made with appropriate input from a woman's health care provider(s).

**Q:** *Can a mother who does not want to breastfeed still get a free bag?*

**A:** Every container of formula has a toll free number which a parent can call to request that a bag or other gifts be shipped to her directly from the company, without involving the hospital. The bags are not really "free" — they are paid for by parents who buy formula. The bags cost the companies less than \$7 each, but a year of formula costs each family up to \$2,000, a substantial portion of which goes to marketing.

**Q:** *Don't the bags include information mothers need to know to make a decision about formula feeding?*

**A:** The ban recognizes that a mother's feeding choice should be between her and her health care provider, and should not be influenced by corporate interests. In fact, research shows that most mothers have made their feeding choice well before they deliver their babies, not when they are given the bag in the hospital. Research does show, however, that among mothers who have chosen breastfeeding, those who are given bags start using formula. Thus the bags may undermine the decision to breastfeed.

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months (that is no food or drink besides breastmilk) is what is recommended by all leading medical authorities.

**Q:** *What are the existing regulations about gift bags?*

**A:** The current regulations state that a nursing mother cannot get free "formula samples and/or formula equipment" unless she requests it or there is a doctor's order. If the ban does not go through, these regulations, written in 1988, will continue to stand.