

I have just observed in my local supermarket a cardboard 'fitover' label advertising loudly that "Nutricia Prebiotics supports your baby's natural immune system". It goes on to proclaim, amongst other things, that "Babies fed infant formula with Nutricia Prebiotics experience: better digestion; softer and more regular stools; and supported natural immune system." It is coloured gold (which we all know means it is first class!).

As a mother who is fortunate enough to know that this class of products are inferior artificial substitutes for breastmilk when it comes to promoting my baby's - or, for that matter, my toddler's - immune system, assisting digestion and 'promoting softer stools' (which are very rarely a problem of any kind in breastfed babies!), this sort of rubbish infuriates me!

The use of such advertising is not fair on the health and family finances of babies whose mothers are not so fortunate. It is also not fair on our national health system, which has to accommodate the additional burden of ill-health caused because this kind of marketing persuades parents that use of artificial (and expensive) substitutes is a healthy choice.

Mothers need support to breastfeed. They do not need to be constantly confronted with cleverly worded, heavily financed propaganda which aims to persuade them to spend large amounts of money on inferior products. But the latter is what they will get until there is proper Government regulation of the marketing and promotional activities of infant 'formula' manufacturers.

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