



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 31, 2012

After Soda, Bloomberg Sets His Sights on Baby Formula

First he tried to take [super-sized sodas](#) out of the mouths of adults. Now New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg wants to take formula out of the mouths of babies. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, with the enthusiastic backing of the mayor, is strongly encouraging — though not yet requiring — city hospitals to lock down all infant formula in an effort to convince new mothers to breastfeed their babies.



“Starting Sept. 3,” reports the [New York Post](#), “the city will keep tabs on the number of bottles that participating hospitals stock and use — the most restrictive pro-breast-milk program in the nation.” Formula will be kept “in out-of-the-way secure storerooms or in locked boxes like those used to dispense and track medications,” and a nurse will have to “sign out the formula like any other medication,” documenting a medical reason for supplying it. In addition, any mother asking for formula for her baby will get a side order: a lecture on the benefits of breastfeeding.

It’s all part of the city’s “Latch On NYC” initiative, designed, according to a Health Department [press release](#), “to support a mother’s choice to breastfeed.” A mother’s choice *not* to breastfeed, on the other hand, will not be supported.

In fact, the Health Department is so intent on preventing babies from ingesting formula that it is also asking participating hospitals — 27 of 40 city hospitals have already signed on — to stop giving out free samples or promotional items from formula manufacturers.

“The promotion and marketing of infant formula often interferes with breastfeeding,” says the press release. “Breastfeeding mothers report that receiving free formula at hospital discharge can make them feel like their breast milk is not enough to satisfy their babies.”

Medical research overwhelmingly demonstrates that breastfeeding is superior to formula feeding. Breast milk supplies antibodies that build up an infant’s immune system, and it helps a newborn’s digestive system develop. Breastfeeding even has benefits for the mother, helping her to recover from childbirth more quickly.

The question, then, is not whether breastfeeding is a good idea but whether it should, for all intents and purposes, be forced on new mothers. “The key to getting more moms to breast-feed,” Lisa Paladino of Staten Island University Hospital told the *Post*, “is making the formula less accessible.” In Bloomberg’s Big Apple, adults cannot be trusted to make wise decisions; the government must do that for them.

While the program is voluntary for the time being, there is a good chance that it will become mandatory in the future. Already Bloomberg’s breastfeeding campaign has progressed from a merely informational approach, in which the city put up pro-breastfeeding posters, to one in which new mothers will have to plead for formula for their babies — and endure a dressing-down over their choice. Should enough New Yorkers insist on feeding their infants anything other than mother’s milk, who doubts that formula will be banned in hospitals and — like large sodas — in stores?



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A near ban on infant formula is, it seems, the ultimate objective of the United Nations. Its World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) launched a program called the [Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative](#) (BFHI) in 1991 with the express purpose of getting governments the world over to promote heavily, if not mandate, “exclusive breastfeeding from birth for 6 months, and continued breastfeeding with timely and appropriate complementary feeding for two years or longer.”

WHO and UNICEF actually have a [“Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding”](#) — nothing must be left to the chance decisions of individuals — that calls for, in each country, “appointing a national breastfeeding coordinator” and a “national breastfeeding committee”; “ensuring that every facility providing maternity services” strongly encourages breastfeeding, including by withholding formula “unless medically indicated”; enforcing the [“International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes,”](#) which demands that hospitals not promote or even display formula; and “enacting imaginative legislation protecting the breastfeeding rights of working women.” The 80-page BFHI suggests numerous ways that governments can implement the global strategy; Bloomberg’s program — which, according to the [Huffington Post](#), is “sponsored by” the WHO — represents just the tip of the iceberg.

Isn’t it curious that while the UN and Bloomberg are both, as they would have it, in favor of a woman’s right to choose whether to give birth or to kill her baby *in utero*, once that baby exits the womb alive these same people would deny the woman the right to choose what to feed her child? Talk about misplaced priorities.



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