

From the Chief Medical Officer:



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

HSS(MD)38-2006

All General Practitioners for cascade to:

- Practice Staff and GP Locums

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Directors of Public Health in HSS Boards

Directors of Nursing in HSS Boards and Trusts for cascade to staff including Community Nurses, Health Visitors, Midwives

AHP Commissioning Officers for cascade to Hospital and Community Dietitians

Medical Directors of HSS Trusts for cascade to Consultant Paediatricians and Medical Staff in Community Paediatric Clinics

Directors of Primary Care in HSS Boards for cascade to GP Advisers and Prescribing Advisers

Directors of Pharmaceutical Services in HSS Boards and Trusts

Regional Procurement Service (Dr Jill Mairs)

Chief Executive RQIA for cascade to relevant Regulated Services including – Children's Homes and Independent Hospitals and Clinics

Director of Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)

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Your Ref:

Our Ref:

Date: 31 August 2006

Dear Colleague

**RE: WITHDRAWAL FROM SALE OF INFANT MILKS BASED ON GOATS' MILK
ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2006**

I attach, for your information and wider circulation, a public health circular from the Department of Health in England highlighting that infant milks, based on goats' milk protein, are not suitable as a source of nutrition for infants (under 1 year of age). These infant milks will no longer be available from 17 September 2006. It is important that parents and carers, who are using infant milks based on goats' milk, should be aware of the impending changes and should be given individual advice about the most appropriate infant formula to be used.

Yours sincerely

ELIZABETH MITCHELL (DR)
(ACTING) CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

MARTIN BRADLEY (MR)
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER

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CHIEF PHARMACEUTICAL OFFICER

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Dear Colleague

Infant milks based on goats' milk will no longer be sold in the UK from 17 September 2006

Health care professionals should inform mothers that infant milks based on goats' milk protein are not suitable as a source of nutrition for infants (under 1 year of age).

Parents use these milks for various reasons but goats' milk is not suitable for those with an allergy to cows' milk protein nor for those with lactose intolerance. Alternative formulas can be prescribed for infants with a confirmed diagnosis of milk protein allergy.

The composition of infant formula and follow-on formula is governed by European legislation. The current legislation only permits infant formulae and follow-on formulae to be based on cows' milk protein, hydrolysed protein or soya protein. Goats' milk is therefore not permitted as a source of protein in infant formula and follow-on formula and as such cannot continue to be legally sold in the UK.

European Commission Regulations

A manufacturer previously asked the European Commission to include goats milk protein to the list of allowed protein sources for infant and follow-on formula and provided a dossier of supporting evidence. The evidence presented was assessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) who concluded that the available scientific data was insufficient to establish the suitability of goats' milk as a protein source in infant and follow-on formula. It was also of the view that there was no convincing data to support the belief that the incidence of allergic reaction is lower when feeding goats' milk based formula compared to cows' milk based formula.

Last year, the European Commission asked EFSA to review its assessment of the suitability of the use of goats' milk protein in infant formulae as further information had been made available by a manufacturer. EFSA reviewed the dossier of additional information and published its opinion on 12 January 2006 that confirmed its previous view (http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/nda/nda_statements/catindex_en.html). The Food Standards Agency has contacted UK manufacturers/distributors of these products to ask them to stop marketing goats' milk products for infants in the UK after 17th September 2006.

Department of Health Recommendations

In light of the EFSA opinion, the Department of Health (DH) advises health professionals not to recommend infant milks based on goats' milk protein as a source of nutrition for infants (under 1 year of age).

It is important that parents have the best possible support regarding infant feeding. Health care professionals should make clients who are using infant milks based on goats milk aware that they will no longer be available in the UK from 17th September 2006. Parents should be given individual advice about the most appropriate infant formula to use.

Some parents believe that infant and follow-on milk based on goats' milk protein is a suitable alternative for babies who are intolerant or allergic to cows' milk formula. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case.

There is also no convincing evidence to support the belief that babies are less likely to suffer from allergic reactions when fed goats' milk-based infant milk compared to cows' milk-based infant formula.

Goats' milk is not a suitable milk source for a cows' milk allergic infant and there is the potential for life threatening reactions due to cross allergenicity. The protein in goats' milk is very similar to that found in cows' milk and most babies who react to cows' milk protein will also react to goats' milk protein. Infants with proven cows' milk protein intolerance can be prescribed an extensively hydrolysed infant formula.

Formula derived from goats' milk is also unsuitable for babies who are lactose intolerant as it contains similar levels of lactose to cows' milk based infant formulae.

Professor Martin Marshall
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health