

Statement on Aptamil and Cow & Gate infant milks in the UK, July 14th 2018

In June and July 2018 Aptamil and Cow & Gate brand infant milks for sale in the UK changed their packaging, prices, and in some cases their composition. We have summarised below what we know so far about these changes, but would also like to highlight that full product information has not yet been made available by Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition (ELN).

Cow & Gate brand milks

1. Cow & Gate brand infant milks have been repackaged, and all new packaging is now 800g instead of 900g. Prices have however changed proportionally in Boots the Chemist (900g was £9.00, 800g is now £8.00). Up to date prices for all infant milks currently marketed in the UK can be found at www.firststepsnutrition.org.

The idealising images and the large brand name on the pack remain the same. The idealising image of a baby bear sleeping on the first infant milk, also seen on the infant milks for hungrier babies, could be seen to imply that infants will sleep better given this infant formula.



The **Cow & Gate first infant milk** and **Cow & Gate infant milk for hungrier babies** says birth – 6 months on the front and that it is a breastmilk substitute. On the reverse it only gives making up instructions for 0-6 months. Danone have said they are changing this on Aptamil first milk by the end of the year, but we await confirmation this will change on Cow & Gate labels.

Cow & Gate follow-on milk says from 6 months – 12 months on the front and that it is enriched with iron, calcium and vitamin D. All follow on formula must contain the same nutrients and it is therefore not 'enriched' it just contains these nutrients as it must do by law.

This is undermining to health workers in the UK where it is recommended that first milk is the only milk most babies need from 0-12 months if not being breastfed, or if being mixed fed, and who advise families that follow- on formula is not needed.

2. Danone Nutricia ELN have stated in their newsletter that there are no compositional changes to Cow & Gate infant milks on the UK market.

Aptamil brand infant milk

1. There is new packaging across the Aptamil infant milk range which highlights the 'shield' as part of the logo, maintains the large brand of Aptamil and the blue colour across the range, and the idealising image of a baby polar bear.



As with the Cow & Gate range, **Aptamil 1 first milk** specifies birth to 6 months on the front of the pack and says that first milk is a breastmilk substitute.

The **Aptamil follow on milk** front of pack states from 6-12 months, and highlights a number of nutrients and components on the front of the pack: the '*Pronutra advance our unique process*' circle highlights GOS/FOS, vitamins A, C, D and iron and LCPS/DHA. There is also an additional line saying '*with vitamin D to support the normal function of the immune system*'. These claims are confusing as most of the ingredients highlighted must be in all products by law and some of those highlighted are considered unnecessary ingredients.

The marketing of products for birth to 6 months, and 6 months to 12 months, will be confusing for families who are told by health workers in the UK that first infant formula is the only infant formula needed in the first year of life. The WHO Code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes and subsequent resolutions are clear that any infant milk marketed for children in the first 3 years of life is a breastmilk substitute.

The feeding guide on the back of the first infant milk currently only provides information for infants up to 6 months of age. The company has already agreed that this will be changed by the end of the year to return to feeding instructions for the whole of the first year. The rationale Danone Nutricia gave for the changes were that families were confused by stages previously and the helpline told us that parents should seek advice from a health worker on the 'needs of their little one at 6 months' as 'all babies are different'. The implication is that many babies will need to 'move on' to a follow on formula. This is in fact what is confusing families as this is not necessary and the confusion has

been caused by £multi-million advertising campaigns by Danone Nutricia for a product that all health agencies agree is not needed.

2. The size of the Aptamil packs has also decreased to 800g, but the prices of these products have been maintained, making them 12% more expensive overall. The updated prices of all infant milks on the UK market can be found at www.firststepsnutrition.org.

The pack remains the same size and is still made from paper composite, but the pack now has a larger gap at the top before the foil to be torn out before use. A small leaflet inside says the product has been reformulated but gives no information on how, and provides an opportunity to promote the company carelines.

3. We have not been told exactly which of the Aptamil product range have been reformulated and how. We believe there are no changes in the composition of ready to feed (RTF) products.

Below we highlight the information we have to date on **Aptamil 1 first infant milk**

Aptamil 1 first infant milk has changed its composition. The company says the ingredients have not changed but the 'process' has, but we have not been given any information about what that might mean. We have the following observations from the product as purchased:

i. The main ingredient is now lactose, not demineralised whey. We have been informed that lactose is a much cheaper ingredient than whey (less than half the price), and changes to the product composition may therefore have been stimulated by a desire to reduce the production cost of the product.

ii. The new powder is more dense than previously and this means that the scoop is smaller. It is important that families do not use an old Aptamil 1 scoop for this powder as that would over-concentrate the feed.

iii. There are no new ingredients on the formula ingredients list and the nutritional composition shows some minor changes in the amount of lactose, salt/sodium, vitamins (retinol equivalents (vitamin A), vitamins K, C, niacin, B6, biotin) and minerals (potassium, chloride, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, fluoride, selenium and iodine), inositol and taurine. None of these are of any significance.

iv. The significant change is in the whey:casein ratio which is now 50:50 not 60:40, reflecting the decreased amount of whey being used in manufacture. This could potentially have an impact on an infant's stooling and digestion. The company is apparently making claims that this new ratio improves the amino-acid profile and has health benefits and have said they will send over information to back up claims, We await this with interest. *This means that Aptamil 1 first milk is no longer a whey dominant formula, and whey based first milks are recommended in the UK for infants in the first year of life.*

v. Danone Nutricia ELN have said publicly that they have very good trial data for this new formulation, but again have failed to send any detail of this when requested. We will attempt to access this trial information but this also brings up issues around transparency from companies and the role of the Department of Health regulators in ensuring that consumers are protected and informed when products are changed. Company self-regulation means that the only response to the concerns about Aptamil 1 first milk are coming from the company themselves, and this also provides them with the opportunity to have contact with health workers and families directly and to market to them. We have heard from those who have been in contact with Danone Nutricia ELN that they have been informed of health benefits related to the new formulation without being provided with any evidence for these.

We will renew calls for an independent regulation body to coordinate information, and challenge companies, around compliance with the UK regulations and on issues relating to clinical trials and testing of products on infants.

vi. **Making up instructions:** In WHO and UK guidance it is stated that you should boil 1 litre of water and leave in the kettle for no more than 30 minutes (as water will no longer be at 70C or above after 30 minutes). The new Danone guidance implies that 30 minutes is the time that the water should be left. In additional information from the company sent to health workers they are suggesting that using hotter water may be problematic and that has been the cause of 'curdled' milk. We have made up bottles at a range of temperatures from 70-90C and found no problem with the composition. Shaking the milk vigorously has been suggested as particularly important by the company. We will continue to ask that the instructions for reconstitution use exactly the same wording as parents will see in other literature.

vii. The reports of infants becoming ill on the new Aptamil first infant milk have been widely reported and we would urge any health worker who has contact with a family where this has been reported to make notes of what occurred and to pass these to the environmental health team locally.

If families are concerned about the reformulated Aptamil 1 first infant milk then advice remains that a first whey based infant milk is the only milk needed by most babies in the first year of life, and that all first milks have to have a similar composition by law. There is no reason not to change brands.

The First Steps Nutrition Trust reports on the composition of infant milks will be amended as soon as we have information on product composition changes.