



# MAPHM

MALTA ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE

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### Abstract Title

Are commercial food products for infants and young children less than 36 months in Malta healthy?

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** A major determinant of healthy growth and development is good nutrition started in early life. Appropriate weaning with adequate nutrition and proper timing influences a child's immediate and future health, including their metabolism and weight.

Commercial baby foods have led to various concerns about content and marketing strategies used which may be adversely affecting the health status of young children. These concerns include: their sweet-taste profile and poor nutritional quality. To assess the suitability of commercially available foods for infants and young children under 36 months in Malta a pilot study was carried out.

**Method:** Two supermarkets and one large pharmacy consented to allow the researchers to photograph over 243 food labels of food products marketed for this age group. The gathered data was analysed using a validated World Health Organization nutrient profiling draft model.

**Results:** Only 88 out of the 243 food products tested according to the WHO draft nutrient profiling model met the criteria used by this model. Only 36 per cent of products studied are of appropriate nutritional standards.

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that the quality of most of the food/beverage products available on the local market are not suitable for infants and young children in this age group. Tested products were found to contain higher amounts of sugar compared to current WHO guidelines; and/or lower amounts of protein; that may be contributing negatively to health. Furthermore, the research showed inappropriate marketing of food/beverage products. These indicate a need for updated regulations and product improvement.

**Key Message 1**

infant and young children

**Key Message 2**

commercial baby food products