

COMPLAINT NUMBER	18/089
COMPLAINANT	R Tait
ADVERTISER	Colgate Palmolive Pty Ltd
ADVERTISEMENT	Colgate Palmolive Pty Ltd, Television
DATE OF MEETING	26 March 2018
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Protex soap showed a mother and daughter in the garden and said in part “My little girl loves playing and exploring outside, but I worry that it might dry out her skin and expose her to harmful bacteria.” The mother says she uses Protex soap to “protect my little explorer.”

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Complainant, R Tait, said: Tv advert for protex soap states that children playing outside come in contact with bacteria and the outdoors dries their skin. I find this offensive as this idea builds fear in people. It is natural and normal for children to play outside and it doesn't hurt them or dry their skin. It is beneficial for children to be exposed to bacteria. It is a well known fact that children brought up in the country and on farms have a lower incidence of allergies, which are basically an overreaction of the immune system. The theory is that when children who are exposed to dirt and bacteria it gives the immune system something to fight so lessening the chance of developing allergies. I find the suggestion that the outdoors is bad for children dirty, drying to the child's skin offensive. I find it doubly offensive that protex contains the active ingredient triclosan the long term use of which may have unanticipated hormonal effects and may lead to antibiotic resistance. They are saying the outdoors is bad and the soap is good, when the opposite is true.

Problem: Antibacterial soap with triclosan

Why it's harmful: This was believed to be more effective than regular soap, but a 2013 Food and Drug Administration report found that long-term daily use of the active ingredient triclosan may have unanticipated hormonal effects and may lead to antibiotic resistance.

A 2014 Consumer.org.nz report found triclosan and triclobaran in some Health Basics, Select, Dettol, Protex and Palmolive hand washes.

Make a healthy home: While the agency continues to collect additional information on antibacterial soaps and body washes, consumers should wash their hands with plain soap and water. If those aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol, said Andrea Fischer, FDA spokeswoman

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/home-property/69899803/the-health-hazards-lurking-in-your-home>

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 2;

The Chair noted the Complainant's concern that children should be exposed to bacteria in order to build immunity and the advertisement was implying that exposure to the outdoors was bad for children.

In considering the complaint, the Chair referred to precedent Decision 16/142, which was not upheld by the Complaints Board and said in part...

“The Complaints Board noted the Advertiser's contention that the hypothesis that stringent cleaning and killing good germs lowers immunity and causes immune deficiency illnesses and allergies has been a subject of debate for many years. The Advertiser provided examples and references related to debate over the “hygiene hypothesis.”

The Complaints Board additionally noted the response to the complaint on behalf of the media from the Commercial Approvals Bureau (CAB) which saw both commercials as promoting good hygiene which was the best way to stop germs spreading. The CAB view was that though it was true a certain amount of exposure to germs was necessary to stimulate immune systems it was only sensible to adopt some simple rules of good hygiene where large numbers of children were in close proximity and infections could easily be transferred.

The Complaints Board agreed that Advertisement One promoting the use of Dettol for good hygiene in schools was not in breach of Rules 2 or 6 or Basic Principle 4 of the Code of Ethics. The advertisement was presented in a balanced way and was not misleading in its promotion of good hygiene at school. The use of the spray on shared desks in the classroom where children worked in close proximity and the depiction of handwashing did not play on fear.

Turning to Advertisement Two, the majority of the Complaints Board agreed with the CAB view and observed that it promoted good hygiene in an attractively illustrated, if sometimes over-the-top, way. The majority did not see the advertisement as suggesting consumers should spray everything and there was no claim there were more germs in the environment to fear than were known and that Dettol must be sprayed to reduce their risk to children.”

Turning to the complaint before her, the Chair said the reference to harmful bacteria in the context of a child exploring the outdoors did not meet the threshold to mislead consumers. The Chair considered the advertisement promoted one option for an antibacterial soap. The claims made in the advertisement were not likely to mislead consumers and the advertisement had been prepared with a due sense of social responsibility under the Code of Ethics.

In addressing the Complainant's concern about the dangers of Triclosan, the Chair said this matter was not within the Advertising Standards Authority's jurisdiction.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled there were no ground for the complaint to proceed.

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.