

Bottle-feeding Guidelines – Best Practices

A breastfed baby will take a bottle best between 4-8 weeks.

Too early – can cause latching problems

Too late – baby can refuse the bottle altogether

Type of bottle: Use a straight bottle rather than a bent bottle; bent bottles force faster flow which can overwhelm your baby.

Type of nipple: Use a soft, longish, slow flow nipple, with a rounded end and a medium-wide base. If your baby takes a pacifier, try matching the shape of the pacifier and bottle nipple. A slow flow nipple requires your baby to suck well and be an active feeder, rather than a passive drinker where the milk just flows in his mouth. Avoid nipples that have a short, narrow nipple and a very wide base. These force the baby to make a tight mouth around the narrow nipple. When baby takes the bottle nipple, the tip of the nipple should be well back in their mouth, close to the junction of the hard and soft palate (where the breast usually goes).

Positioning for feeding: Position baby so that s/he is sitting upright (about 30 degrees). Hold the bottle **horizontally** (parallel to the floor). Baby will have much better control of the flow this way and will feed more like s/he does at the breast (for example, when your baby pauses during feeding, milk will not continue to flow from the bottle, forcing your baby to gulp). You don't want gravity to help pour milk into baby's mouth. You can still keep the nipple filled with milk to avoid baby swallowing air, but the milk should not be filling the bottle neck. Avoid allowing baby's head to lean back into the crook of your elbow. This over-extends baby's neck and also reduces his/her control over the flow.

Starting a feed: Using the tip of the nipple, brush baby's lips gently, stimulating the rooting reflex. When baby opens his mouth very wide, bring him/her toward the bottle so they are in control of taking it into their mouth rather than feeling that *you* are putting the nipple into their mouth. Your baby should "drive" the process. Keep enough pressure on the bottle so it slides the entire nipple along the roof of baby's mouth right up to the cap. Tilt the bottle just enough to keep the **nipple** (not the bottle neck) filled with milk. As the bottle empties, take care not to hyperextend the baby's neck.

How much to feed: Closely observe baby throughout the feeding. Slow down or pause (take bottle right out of baby's mouth) if she/he is showing signs of distress (frowning, wide-eyed) or if baby shakes his/her head, or pushes nipple back with his/her tongue. Baby should not be gulping, feeding constantly without breaks, or gasping for air. **Let your baby decide how much to drink;** s/he has meals and snacks like everyone else, and will *not* take the same amount every time. Your baby will tell you clearly by his/her body language and facial expression when s/he is satisfied. The average baby gradually works up to full volume by about 6 weeks of age which stays relatively stable until they start solid foods. **Most babies drink 26 – 36 oz total over 24 hrs. If your baby is consistently drinking more than 40 oz in 24 hrs, s/he may be overfeeding.**



Good position, baby in control of flow.



Poor position, baby **not** in control of flow.



Bottle Feeding Guidelines – Things to Avoid

Avoid propping the bottle – no matter how old the baby is. Always hold your baby while bottle feeding, even when they are old enough to hold the bottle themselves. Remember that feeding is a BIG part of an infant's relationship with you. You want them to bond with YOU, not the bottle!



Do not mix infant cereal in with baby's bottle. This changes the nutritional balance of the breast milk or formula (adds carbohydrate), and thickens it, which can increase risk of choking or aspiration in some babies. There is no evidence to support the widely believed myth that cereal in the night-time bottle helps babies to sleep through the night.

Avoid putting baby to bed with a bottle, or bottle feeding a baby who is lying down flat. This increases baby's risk of choking or aspirating (breathing liquid into their lungs), having ear infections and developing tooth decay. Going to bed with the bottle also makes it much more difficult to wean from the bottle later on.

Avoid putting juice or cow's milk in baby's bottle (or any other sugary drink). Only breast milk, properly mixed formula or water should go in a bottle. Small amounts of diluted juice can be offered to baby in a free-flowing cup around the time they start solid foods (usually 5-8 months). A free-flowing cup may have a spouted lid, but does not have a spill-proof valve, and allows liquid to flow freely by gravity into an older baby's mouth.

Avoid over-feeding your bottle-fed baby. All babies need to suckle for comfort; if baby still wants to suck after a usual feed, try a pacifier or other comfort measure first. Also review the guidelines on the other side of this page, and make sure baby is feeding slowly enough to feel satisfied. Talk to your doctor or registered dietitian if your baby is consistently drinking more than 40 ounces of formula or breast milk from a bottle in a 24 hour period.

Weaning: When baby starts drinking whole cow's milk around 12 months, this is the perfect time to wean from the bottle. Your baby should already be drinking well from a cup at this age, and if they never got in the habit of going to sleep with a bottle, you will be so far ahead of the game! When you stop offering formula, simply stop offering the bottle. Put all liquids in a free flowing cup. Most babies do very well if the best practice guidelines have been followed all along.

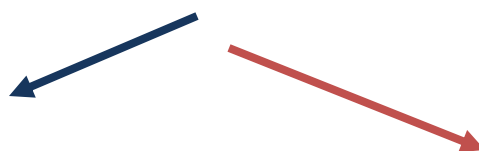
Please do not prop the bottle or allow your baby to bottle feed lying down.

Do not put them to bed with a bottle! Babies can easily learn to go to sleep without the bottle if they are taught to do so from day one.

You can help prevent



Baby Bottle Tooth Decay



Recurrent Ear Infections