

Feeding with a Bottle—Tips

Tune into baby while bottle feeding. Here are some strategies to ensure the bottle-feeding process is responsive.

Use paced bottle-feeding for young infants. By holding the infant upright and monitoring milk flow, paced bottle-feeding allows infants to feed at their own rate. This helps baby to set the speed of a feeding and helps to avoid overfeeding. It is appropriate for all bottle-feeding babies, whether they are drinking breast milk or formula.

The video demonstrates paced bottle feeding.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGPm5SpLxXY>

Paced Bottle Feeding Video - Transcript

We don't recommend feeding babies with a bottle while they are lying on their backs because they are more vulnerable to over feeding and tend to lose control of the flow of the bottle. This can end up being a forced feeding situation because they have to keep swallowing to keep up with the flow of the bottle to prevent choking. Paced feeding mimics the control babies can have at the breast and prevents forced feeding. Some breastfeeding experts have observed that babies are less likely to refuse the breast when they receive the bottle in a paced fashion.

Start by holding the baby upright supporting the torso with your arm. Place the nipple on the upper or lower lip. Wait until he opens his mouth and let him draw the nipple in. Avoid sticking the nipple in his mouth before he's ready. It helps to let the baby suck a little without getting milk. This is similar to breast feeding where a baby sucks for a while before the milk starts to flow. Allow the nipple to partially fill with milk leaving some air in the nipple. By keeping the baby upright, we slowed down the feeding. Gravity isn't pulling the milk out as fast when the bottle is level with the floor. Babies take natural breaks when eating and when those natural breaks come, tilt the bottle down a bit to really allow the break, preventing milk from flowing into the bottle while the baby is taking that break. When the baby resumes sucking, tilt the bottle back up. That way parents can relax, get to know their baby, enjoy gazing at the baby, and watch overall behavior.

Follow the babies lead and allow the baby to have control. When the baby has control, the baby will not drink as quickly. It is common to see people wiggle the bottle in an attempt to get the baby to suck more. This should be avoided, because we want the baby to set the pace of the feeding. Watch the baby's face for facial expressions or signs that they need a slower flow, such as widening of the eyes, furrowing of the brow, or turning or pulling. Even a baby that is

accustomed to quick feedings will begin to welcome the brakes and will probably start to take breaks on his own. As you can see here, the bottle is horizontal, and the baby is taking a break. Paced feeding can reduce pressure on mom when she goes back to work. It slows down how much the baby takes in, so we reduce overeating. It helps avoid the baby eating large feedings when away from mom. If he does eat too much at daycare, he might not nurse as frequently as mom would like when they are together.

No need to worry about the baby taking in air. It will come out one end or the other. Burping the baby periodically will help if air intake is a concern. This method of bottle feeding takes some practice. When working with families, explain paced feeding while they offer the bottle. If you show them how to do it, try to make a point of having them practice it in front of you.

- **Learn to pay close attention to the baby's cues rather than how much milk is left in the bottle.** Try covering the bottom of the bottle with a paper towel while feeding, so that you can't see how much the baby is drinking. This way you can pay closer attention to the baby's cues.
- **Stop the feeding when baby is showing signs of fullness.** Save the rest for later. Trying to finish a bottle or baby food jar overrides baby's natural instinct to stop eating. This increases the risk of overeating and weight problems. Many programs have regulations that require throwing away breastmilk or formula one hour after it is prepared. If you or a parent is concerned about a baby eating enough, stop when the baby is full, and offer the bottle again just before the hour is up, if the baby is showing signs of hunger.