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Empty rectangular box for taking notes.

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BABY-PACED BOTTLE FEEDING

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FEEDING



It is normal for human babies to breastfeed. Any time a baby is not placed at the breast to nurse, the feeding method should copy breastfeeding as much as possible. Many people use bottles to feed breastmilk or formula, but most have never been shown how to bottle feed in a way that lets the baby be in control of the feeding. Letting your baby control their bottle feeding helps them manage suck, swallow, and breathing. When a baby is not bottle fed in this way, the liquid in the bottle drips into the baby's mouth even without prompting, and baby will swallow it so they do not choke. This makes parents think baby is hungry or needs more. This cycle continues until baby pushes the nipple out of the mouth or drinks all the liquid in the bottle. Baby-paced bottle feeding will reduce the chance of overfeeding. You also may find that your baby spits up less often, and is not as fussy.

How to feed using baby-paced bottle feeding

1. Use a bottle nipple with a wide base, and one that the milk does not come out very fast.
2. Hold your baby upright. For a very young baby, be sure to support the head and neck with your hand, not your arm.
3. Gently touch the nipple to your baby's lip. Wait for baby to open their mouth. This might not happen right away, and you may need to touch baby's lip a few more times. Once baby's mouth opens wide, place all of the nipple in it. Position the bottle so it is horizontal. If held this way, you will see the nipple only partly filled with liquid. Tip the bottle just a bit, so that the tip of the nipple is filled with liquid. It is okay if there is air at the base of the nipple.
4. Change sides at the next feeding to let baby use both eyes and sides of the body so baby will be less likely to prefer one side for feeding.

Tip: A feeding should take about 15-30 minutes. If it is much quicker, you may need to tip the base of the bottle down to slow the feeding down or choose a nipple with a slower flow. If the feeding session is much slower, raise the base of the bottle up a little to pick up the pace, or try a nipple that allows milk to flow faster, so the baby does not get upset.

Watch to see what baby tells you

Signs that baby needs something to change

- Baby swallows quickly, and does not take a break after each swallow.
- Milk spills out of baby's mouth, often at the corners.
- Baby stiffens arms or legs.
- Baby coughs or flails arms.

These signs may mean that the baby needs a break. Take the bottle out of baby's mouth and let them settle down, then gently offer the nipple again using the steps listed under *How to feed using baby-paced bottle feeding* if baby wants more.

See Tip under *How to feed using baby-paced bottle feeding* to learn how to slow down the flow of milk.

Signs that baby wants to end the feeding

- Falls asleep.
- Turns head from side to side.
- Stops sucking.
- Lets go of the nipple, pushes it out of their mouth, or pushes the bottle away.
- Purses lips, making it hard to get the nipple into the mouth.

These signs are baby's way of saying, "I've had enough at this feeding."

Things to remember

- Always hold the bottle when feeding baby. Never prop a bottle because it could harm your baby.
- When feeding, be sure baby is not swaddled, or at least baby's hands are outside of the swaddle blanket. Babies use their hands to take part in the feeding. You also need to see the hands to help know that baby is calm.
- Always have baby facing you. This lets you and your baby make eye contact and interact. It also lets you see how your baby is doing so you can respond to any cues baby gives you.
- Let your baby tell you they are done. This may mean baby does not finish all the liquid in the bottle. That is okay. If you push or force the bottle back into baby's mouth when baby doesn't want it, baby is likely to be overfed and unhappy.

