

Baby-Led Bottle-Feeding

Tips for Success

South Shore Health supports parents in their feeding choices for their baby. This handout has been made for parents who have chosen to bottle-feed their child expressed breastmilk or formula. It will help you and your baby have a pleasant and successful feed.

Choosing a Bottle & Nipple:

- A basic, straight bottle will work best for most babies.
- A round nipple is fine to use in most cases.
- There is a wide range of how fast nipples will flow. The slowest flowing nipple that is a “good fit” may be best to start.
- **NOTE:** If you are breastfeeding, avoid using orthodontic nipples (pictured to the right).
- Your baby should be able to latch onto the base of the nipple, with lips touching a portion of the base and rolled out.
- Their lips should seal around the nipple so that no milk is leaking.



A Bottle/Nipple is a Good Fit When:

- ✓ Swallows are rhythmic – Your baby is swallowing after every one or two sucks.
- ✓ Your baby does not choke, gulp or gag.
- ✓ There are normal pauses in feeding.
- ✓ Your baby looks relaxed during the feeding.

Note:

- **Everything** you use to prepare milk and/or feed your baby should be sterilized to get rid of germs until your baby is **four** months old.
- Ensure your well water is safe to use by having it tested when required.
- Replace nipples when they change colour or become sticky and cracked.

How to Sterilize your Bottles and Equipment:

- 1) Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry with a clean or disposable cloth.
- 2) Wash the bottles (except disposable liners), and everything else you will be using, in hot soapy water. Rinse well.
- 3) Put everything in a large pot and cover with water. Put the lid on the pot.
- 4) Bring the water to a boil. Let boil for 2 minutes.
- 5) Remove from heat. Cool. Leave everything in the pot with the lid on until you are ready to fill the bottles.
- 6) When ready, use sterilized tongs to take everything out of the pot. Drain on a clean dishtowel or paper towel.

Cues That Your Baby May Be HUNGRY:

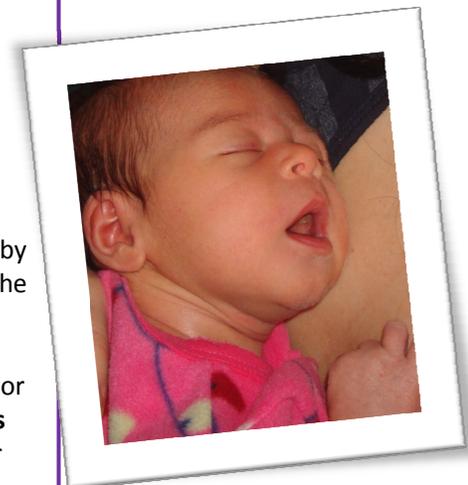
- ✓ Holding their hands or fist over their chest.
- ✓ Sucking on their hands and/or fingers.
- ✓ Turning towards your body with an open mouth.
- ✓ Smacking of their lips.
- ✓ Sticking out their tongue.
- ✓ Making of sucking sounds.
- ✓ Crying.

NOTE: Although babies do not need a bottle every time they cry, in time you will soon be able to spot their “I’m hungry” cry.

Cues That Your Baby May Be FULL:

- ✓ Turning away.
- ✓ Closing their mouth.
- ✓ Their hands and arms are relaxed.
- ✓ Falling asleep.

NOTE: All babies are not the same. Your baby may have cues of his own to tell you when he or she has had enough. Babies also do not need to be fed on a schedule and will take different amounts of expressed breastmilk or formula from feeding to feeding, and **that’s ok**. Follow your baby’s cues; trust that your baby will let you know how much he or she wants to eat.



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Positioning Your Baby for Feeding:

- Sit comfortably.
- Hold your baby upright in a seated position.
- Support head in line with the rest of the body.
- Touch the nipple of the bottle to the lips or cheek of your baby.
- As your baby's mouth opens wide, gently put the nipple into their mouth.
- **NOTE:** Avoid forcing the bottle into your baby's mouth.
- The bottle should be horizontal to the floor and the nipple should be fully inside the baby's mouth.
- Their lips should be open and curled out around the base of the nipple.



***NOTE:** Allow for a short period of sucking before tipping the bottle up, and then begin to tip the bottle slowly. This allows milk to flow enough to keep the tip of the nipple filled with milk.



~Feeding is a great time for eye contact and cuddling – Babies love to gaze into your face!~

The Feeding Process: **ALLOW YOUR BABY TO LEAD**

- Watch for signs that the feeding may be too fast or that your baby is starting to become upset:
 - There is milk spilling from corners of their mouth.
 - Your baby looks worried.
 - Your baby turns their head away or pushes away bottle.
 - Their fingers and/or toes are spread apart.
 - The baby is gulping or panting.
- If so, tip the bottle down to stop the flow of milk and pause until your baby is ready to start drinking again.
- **NOTE:** Your baby may feed in quick bursts of sucking followed by times of rest. These short breaks are needed to give time for your baby to feel hunger or fullness.
- Don't force your baby to finish all of the expressed breastmilk or formula in the bottle; using their own **CUES OF HUNGER OR FULLNESS** to guide the feeding will help your baby learn healthy eating patterns.
- During and/or after feeding, your baby will need to be burped; seat your baby on your lap while giving their head support or holding them over your shoulder. Gently rub or pat your baby on the back. Some babies will burp more easily than others and spitting up a small amount of milk is, in most cases, not a concern.

Creating a Good Relationship with Feeding:

- Switch your baby from one side of your body to the other during the feeding to promote proper brain/body development.
- The parent(s) or caregiver(s) may want to do most of the feedings themselves, especially during the first few weeks to help build a strong bond with their baby.
- Babies should be held often even when you aren't feeding them so that your baby doesn't think that being held means that they will be fed.

To find out how to express and store breastmilk, refer to **"Breastfeeding Basics"**

To find out how to make up formula as safely as possible, refer to **"How to Feed your Baby Infant Formula"**

