

## Paced Bottle Feeding

If you feed your baby from a bottle, you may find these suggestions helpful.

### Slow flow nipples:

- Use a truly **slow flow** nipple and offer the bottle in a “paced” fashion (see information below). Some nipples advertised as “slow flow” are not slow enough. An ideal nipple requires a baby to suck to remove milk. Flow that is too fast will cause a baby to lift the back of their tongue to slow the flow down. If a baby does this while breastfeeding, they end up pushing the breast out of their mouth. **When you “pace” a bottle feeding**, you can help prevent this. A baby can also get used to faster flow and become upset by flow at the breast.

### Standard vs. wide base nipples:

- **Avoid a long skinny nipple with a very wide base.** To breastfeed well, a baby needs to take a lot of breast in their mouth. A standard width nipple is often preferable because most babies can get their mouth completely around the nipple base. A “wide mouth” nipple, often encourages baby to latch only to the narrow part of the nipple, which is not helpful to breastfeeding.

### Holding a baby during a bottle feeding:

- **When holding your baby for a bottle feeding, think about how a baby is held at the breast.** Babies are generally in a side lying position facing the breast, or upright with their head higher than their body. This allows a baby to control the milk flow and pool milk in the side of their mouth if the flow is too fast.

### How to start a bottle feeding:

- **You may find it helpful to start a bottle feeding** by laying (touching) the bottle nipple over your baby’s lips or under their nose, with the tip of the nipple pointing at their nose. When your baby opens wide, gently and slowly insert the nipple so that your baby’s lips flange out (or cover) the wider part of the nipple. You should be able to see the pink of your baby’s lips, like they are positioned at the breast.

### How to “pace” a feeding:

- **To avoid immediate reward of milk flow with first suck while bottle feeding**, you may want to angle the bottle so there is no milk in the bottle nipple for the first 30 seconds that your baby is sucking. Then tip the bottle so the nipple fills only halfway (**see drawing below**). This will help your baby expect slower flow at the breast and encourage them to “pace” the feeding, rather than react to a faster flow by guarding with their tongue. For a video of paced bottle feeding, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGPm5SpLxXY>



### When a faster flow bottle or a finger feeding may be helpful:

- **If your baby is very sleepy and weight gain is important**, you may **temporarily** need a faster flow bottle, but it is important that your baby is not overwhelmed by the flow and chokes or spits milk out while feeding. It is normal for a bottle feeding to take 10 to 20 minutes with a young baby. If your baby is very sleepy, you may find it easier to finger feed your baby temporarily.

### When your baby refuses to take a bottle:

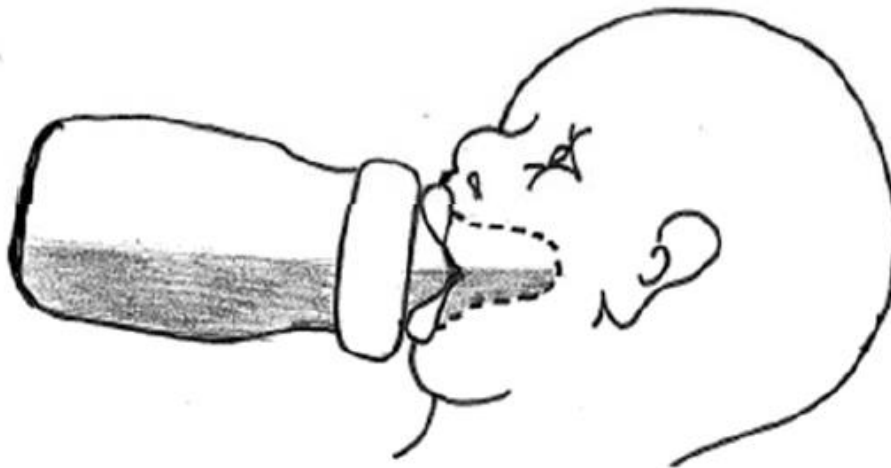
- **If your baby is older than one month of age and has never had a bottle**, it may be difficult to get your baby to accept a bottle. It may be easier for someone other than the breastfeeding parent to offer the bottle, and it may take a LOT of patience on the part of the person offering the bottle. Make sure they understand this is a new experience for your baby and it may take your baby a while to learn how to bottle feed and accept the bottle. See our information on [Bottle Refusal](#).

### Older babies and bottles and cups:

- **A baby who is older than four months of age** may do better going straight to a cup with a soft or firm spout, rather than trying to learn how to take a bottle.

### Using a bottle for “suck training”:

At times we use a bottle to help a baby learn to suck more effectively at the breast if they are mostly chewing up and down rather than using their tongue to grasp the breast and pull gently. Your lactation consultant may recommend you try this: gently press the entire bottle nipple downward on your baby’s tongue to help create a groove down the center of your baby’s tongue. Then gently pull the nipple out of your baby’s mouth to encourage your baby to pull the nipple back in.



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