



Bottle Refusal

July, 2016

Help! My Baby Won't Take a Bottle.

It can be very stressful for parents when their baby has a hard time taking a bottle. Here are some tips that have been helpful for some families, and hopefully will be helpful for yours, too.

Try having someone other than mom offer the bottle.

It makes sense that babies associate feeding with the comfort of nursing. For some babies, mom needs to be out of the house, not just in another room, for them to take the bottle from another caregiver.

Try offering the bottle when the baby is not very hungry.

When babies are having a tough time taking a bottle, it can help to offer it between feedings, or when the baby is not very hungry. Learning a new skill takes patience and effort, and we all have more of both when we feel well rested and calm.

Try feeding the baby in different positions.

Babies are unique in their preferred feeding positions. Preferred positions for breastfeeding are typically different than those preferred for bottle feeding. Try holding the baby facing out to look around the room or sitting propped up on your legs.

Try moving around while feeding the baby.

Feeding the baby while you are walking around the room and gently bouncing or swaying may help some babies take the bottle.

Try allowing the baby to latch onto the bottle nipple herself rather than putting it directly into her mouth.

You might tickle the baby's upper lip and nose with the bottle and wait for her to open wide to latch onto the nipple, similar to how she would latch on to a breast. Be sure she latches onto the wide base of the nipple and not just the tip, with both lips flanged outward, as she would when breastfeeding.

Try wrapping the bottle in a shirt or cloth that mom has worn, so it smells like her.

Some moms sleep with a burp cloth and then wrap it around the baby's bottle.

Try different temperatures of milk in the bottle.

Some babies prefer warmed milk, others room temperature milk, and others cold milk. Experiment a bit to see if your baby has a preference. You may also try warming the bottle nipple (holding it under warm water) before the feeding so it is not cold. For a teething baby, chill the bottle nipple in the fridge before the feeding.

Try different bottle nipples.

The extensive choice of bottle nipples available at stores can be overwhelming, and unfortunately there is not one “best” nipple. The most expensive bottle/nipple combinations aren’t necessarily better than the less costly options. Look for a long, straight nipple rather than a short, flat one, so that the baby latches deeply on the bottle like she would at the breast. Consider trying a nipple that is “newborn” or “slow flow” so the milk comes out more slowly and doesn’t overwhelm the baby. However some babies might prefer a faster flow nipple, especially if you have a fast and furious letdown. You may also try silicone versus rubber nipples.

Try tasting and smelling your breastmilk.

Many women notice that their expressed breastmilk smells strong or tastes soapy. One theory is that this is due to the lipase enzyme which naturally breaks down the fats in breastmilk. Another thought is that the altered smell and taste may be related to certain fats in your diet, particularly fish oil or other oil supplements. You may even try to stop eating fish for awhile or withhold fatty acid supplements to see if that helps. This breastmilk is perfectly safe for babies to drink, but some do not like the taste of it.

Try feeding the baby with something other than a bottle.

You may try feeding the baby with a spoon, sippy cup or regular open cup (perhaps a small medicine cup or shot glass). Hold the baby in your lap in an upright, supported position. Bring the spoon or cup to the baby’s mouth and allow the baby to take the milk herself by just touching the milk in the spoon or cup to the baby’s upper lip. Let the baby set the pace. Be very careful to not dump the milk into the baby’s mouth to avoid choking.

Try “introducing the mouth to the bottle” rather than trying to get the baby to drink.

Step 1: Bring the nipple (no bottle attached) to the baby’s mouth and rub it along the baby’s gums and inner cheeks, allowing the baby to get used to the feeling and texture of the nipple. If the baby doesn’t like this, try again later.

Step 2: Once the baby accepts the nipple in her mouth, encourage her to suck on the nipple. Without the bottle attached, place your finger inside the nipple hole and rub the nipple gently against the baby’s tongue.

Step 3: When the baby is comfortable with the first two steps, pour some drops of milk into the nipple without attaching the nipple to the bottle. Start by offering small sips of milk, making sure to stop when the baby shows that she has had enough.

If your baby still doesn’t take the bottle after you’ve tried these tricks.

-Can you shift your schedule so that you can take a break from work to go to your baby and breastfeed her there?

-Can your caregiver bring the baby to you to breastfeed throughout the day?

-Can you telecommute/work from home for a while?

My baby will finally take a bottle, but generally won't drink much at daycare.

Some babies do something called “reverse cycle nursing” when their moms go back to work. They spend most of the day sleeping/not eating and then at night feed frequently to make up for all of the eating they missed out on during the day. Some moms like reverse cycle nursing because it means they do not have to pump as much milk during the day. However, the interrupted sleep makes it really rough for mom to meet her own sleep needs. Some families are able to work out their own system to help the mom get as much sleep as possible while still attending to the baby’s nighttime nursing needs. Here are a few tips for getting as much rest as you can:

Sleep in, go to bed early, or sleep when the baby sleeps whenever you have the chance.

Sleep near your baby. Options include a crib in your bedroom or a co-sleeper attached to your bed.

Try to do more work early in the day so you are able to wind down and go to bed earlier in the evening.

Prioritize the things you need to get done, and enlist friends and family to help out so you can possibly spend some of that extra time sleeping.