



Bottle-feeding Your Breastfed Baby:  
***A Guide for Success***



A close-up photograph of a baby lying on its back on a white blanket with a colorful pattern of flowers, butterflies, and owls. The baby is wearing a pink short-sleeved top and pink shorts over a white diaper. It is holding its feet with both hands, bringing them up towards its eyes and nose. The baby has a content expression, with its mouth slightly open and eyes partially closed. The text "Congratulations on breastfeeding your baby!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

***Congratulations  
on breastfeeding your baby!***



## ***Your breastmilk helps protect you and your baby from illness and disease.***

If you are going back to school or work, you may worry about how to continue to provide breastmilk when you are away. This brochure has answers to common questions about breastfeeding and bottle-feeding and offers tips to share with your baby's caregivers. Using this information will help keep your milk supply up so that your baby will continue to receive the benefits of your breastmilk.



The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends babies receive only breastmilk for about the first 6 months and this can be done not only by feeding him from the breast, but with only your breastmilk in a bottle. Make a special goal to feed your baby breastmilk only, either by breast or bottle during this time and then celebrate your success with family and friends when you reach your goal!

## *Is it okay to breastfeed and bottle-feed?*

**Yes.** To be successful with bottle-feeding your breastmilk, you must first make a good breastmilk supply. Putting your baby to the breast and feeding only your milk for the first 4-6 weeks help you create a large milk supply. Creating a large milk supply early will help you keep up a larger milk supply once you start using a bottle.

## *What if my partner or family offers to help me by giving my baby a bottle right away?*



Teach family and caregivers about how breastmilk supply works. All of your baby's sucking should be at the breast for the first 4-6 weeks to help you have a large milk supply. The more your baby eats, the more milk your body makes. Also, each time your baby breastfeeds, you both get a chance to practice how to work with each other and practice makes perfect! Family, friends and your partner may offer to feed your baby for you in those first few days and weeks. Let them know that there are many ways to help you. They can rock the baby to sleep, give the baby a sponge bath or watch the baby while you take a nap.



## How do I know when and how much to feed my baby by bottle?

Because babies were born to feed from the breast, all other ways that you feed your baby should copy breastfeeding. All babies use signs or “cues” to tell you when they are ready to start and end their feedings. It may take you a few days to a few weeks to understand your baby’s cues. Reading these signs correctly prevents your baby from being overfed and helps you recognize exactly what your baby needs.



### Look for “I’m ready to feed” cues like:

- alert or awake baby
- sucking on hands
- smacking lips
- looking for the breast or bottle



### “I’m ready to stop” feeding cues might be:

- milk spilling from the mouth
- fussiness, crying
- turning the head away from the breast or bottle
- closing the mouth
- sleepy baby

It is important to know that crying is not always a signal or cue that your baby is hungry. Crying is your baby’s way of saying, “I need something to be different now!” This can also mean your baby is too full, so watch for cues that he is done eating. Look for other reasons your baby might be crying first, before offering the bottle. He simply may need to feel you near him or want to be held. Other reasons might be: your baby is too hot or cold, is tired, needs a diaper change, or may be having pain.



### Caregiver Tip:

Watch the baby and not the clock during the feeding. Encourage your family and caregiver to practice learning your baby’s feeding/ending cues. This is a great way for them to better understand your baby’s special language!

## What is the best way to feed my baby a bottle?

Holding your baby in an upright position keeps him close to you and helps give him more control and comfort during the feeding. Other helpful feeding tips include:



- Touch your baby's bottom lip with the bottle nipple, this will help the baby to open his mouth.
- Place the nipple inside his mouth slowly and gently. Never force the baby's mouth open.
- Try offering only 1/2 to 1 ounce in the bottle to help baby learn to drink without feeling too full.
- Increase feeding amount only if your baby seems hungry and gives a cue for more.
- Introduce the bottle by offering it once a day between breastfeeding when your baby is neither full nor hungry. This may help him to try this new feeding method with less stress.
- About half way through the bottle-feeding, switch your baby's position by moving him from one arm to the other. This helps prevent your baby from preferring one side when breastfeeding and also keeps good eye contact with him, helping you to better read his cues.

### Caregiver Tip:

Encourage your caregiver to wait to feed your baby if you are coming to pick him up from child care soon. They can try to distract him or give him a smaller amount by bottle so he'll be ready to nurse.





- Let your baby take breaks when he wants to, just like he does when breastfeeding, to help him naturally control the flow of milk. If he gets tense or begins to gulp the milk, tilt the baby and bottle slightly forward to move milk out of his mouth. You may also remove the bottle completely from his mouth and allow him a break. This is a good time to read his cues for starting again or ending the feeding altogether.
- Never force your baby to finish the milk in the bottle. Stop feeding him as soon as he shows “I’m ready to stop” cues.

## What kind of bottle nipples should I buy?



- It is best to try a few different nipples to see which one your baby likes the best. Choose a bottle nipple that most looks like your own nipple.
- Bottle nipples are labeled according to flow, shape, texture and length.



- **Flow** - bottle nipples are labeled as slow, medium or fast flow. Newborns may handle a slow rate better, but as they grow, may prefer a faster rate.
- **Shape** - find a nipple that is wider at the bottom. This encourages your baby to open his mouth wide, just as he would when breastfeeding.



- **Texture** - the breast is soft, so choose nipples with softer textures.
- **Length** - choose a length that is slightly longer than the normal length of your nipple at rest.

## What if my baby refuses the bottle?



- Offer the bottle when your baby is happy and calm, not when he is upset.
- If your baby refuses the bottle, comfort him with holding, singing or his favorite toy. Breastfeed him after he calms down. Try the bottle again later in the day.
- Babies may refuse to feed when they do not feel well. Check your baby for signs of illness.
- Hide the bottle with a blanket or washcloth during the feeding.



- Some babies do better taking the bottle from another person, but if your baby refuses the bottle from another person, try giving them something to hold that smells like you, such as a scarf or recently worn shirt.
- Offer the bottle to your baby in a different place, such as outside.
- Try different positions like placing your baby with their back to your tummy facing away from you.
- Try placing a few drops of your breastmilk on the bottle nipple before feeding.



If your baby continues to refuse the bottle from another person, try giving the bottle yourself. Your baby already trusts you for feedings and may feel more comfortable taking the bottle from you. You can try to start the feeding with the bottle and then hand the baby and bottle off to someone to finish the feeding.



## *Is there a special way to prepare the bottles for a feeding?*

Clean bottles can help keep your baby from getting sick. Before handling your baby's bottles, wash your hands with warm, soapy water and dry with a clean cloth each time.



- Wash bottles, caps and nipples in a dishwasher or bottle sterilizer each time you use them. You can also hand wash and rinse the bottles and nipples, but make sure all parts are boiled for five minutes before you use them.



- Use a bottle brush to clean the inside of the bottle and nipples.
- If you will not be using the bottles right away, fully dry and put together the bottles after you remove them from the sterilizer or dishwasher. This helps keep germs and bacteria from getting inside the bottle or touching the nipple.
- Use a bottle only once and then clean it before using it again.

## *How do I store my breastmilk?*



- Breastmilk can be stored in a plastic or glass bottle with a screw-on lid or in sterile zip-seal breastmilk storage bags, available in the baby section of most grocery stores.
- Label the containers with the date the milk was pumped and your baby's name. This is helpful if your baby goes to child care.
- Pumped breastmilk should be cooled as soon as possible. You can store it in a refrigerator or in a cooler with ice packs. The milk can also be frozen if you aren't going to use it right away.

## Breastmilk storage guidelines

	Best used within	Still safe to use within
Insulated cooler bag	24 hours	24 hours
Refrigerator	3 days	5 days
Freezer section inside a refrigerator	2 weeks	2 weeks
Freezer with a separate door or deep freezer	6 months	12 months

The fat in your milk will separate and rise to the top when stored. This is normal.

## Thawing your breastmilk



- Thaw frozen breastmilk slowly by swirling the closed container of milk in warm water or by putting the container in the fridge the day before you want to use it.
- Don't use hot water to thaw breastmilk and never thaw breastmilk in the microwave. The milk could get too hot and burn your baby's mouth. Microwaving can also damage valuable proteins in the milk.
- Thawed milk can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours, but it should not be refrozen.

### Caregiver Tip:

If there's breastmilk left over, don't throw it out! It will keep just fine in the refrigerator until the next feeding.





**For more information on how to successfully  
bottle-feed your breastfed baby as you get ready  
to go back to work or school:**

- Visit [www.breastmilkcounts.com](http://www.breastmilkcounts.com).
- Call your WIC clinic and ask to set up an appointment to help you develop a plan that will work best for you and your baby.
- Ask your WIC breastfeeding counselor to share our *Breastfeeding and Returning to Work* brochure with you.



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