

Helping a Breastfed Baby Accept a Bottle



Occasionally a breastfed baby will refuse to accept a bottle nipple. If you work outside the home, or need to be away for more than the interval between feedings, try these suggestions!

Don't wait too long

Sometime between 4-6 weeks is a good time to introduce a bottle. Sooner may interfere with the establishment of good breastfeeding. Waiting too long may result in a baby who refuses the bottle.

Have someone else give the bottle

Many breastfeeding babies won't take a bottle from their mother. The baby can smell you and knows that there is something better at hand. Have someone else give the bottle and you may have to leave the room, or even the house.

Sometimes an experienced grandmother or day care provider will have success transitioning the baby to the bottle when the parents have been unsuccessful.

Try different nipples

Features to look for in bottle nipples:

- Size of the base (wide, medium, narrow or conical)
- Length of the shank (short, medium, long)
- Flow rate (slow, medium, rapid)

Try a conical shaped nipple with a slow flow first. Place in the baby's mouth until he gets a wide latch-on. If the baby rejects that try a narrow or medium base, long shank nipple with a slow flow. Give a variety of nipple shapes and materials a try (silicon and rubber).

If the flow seems too slow and the baby becomes frustrated, purchase nipples rated for a faster flow or try enlarging the holes in the nipple with a hot needle.

If the flow is too fast, the baby will have a panicked look on his face, cough and sputter, and milk may leak from his lips. Obtain a slower flow nipple. Ideally the bottle-feeding will take the same amount of time as a typical breastfeeding. That may be 10-30 minutes depending on the age of the baby.

Allow the baby time to adjust

Gently stimulate the baby's mouth with the nipple and allow the baby time to become familiar with it. Try letting the baby play with it like a toy at other than feeding times. Let the baby get familiar with it on his own terms.

Try motion

Sit in a rocking chair or gently sway back and forth while giving the baby a bottle.





Give lots of lap time

Using a bottle should not reduce the amount of time that the baby gets being held, cuddled and loved.

Warm it up or cool it down

Try warming the fluid in the bottle and warm the nipple to body temperature. Or try putting it in the refrigerator (teething babies like this), or run cool water over the nipple.

Try different holding positions



Some babies take a bottle better cuddled in a breastfeeding position. Others do better in a totally different position. Try propping the baby in your lap with his back to your chest (see photo).

The baby will see the room while drinking the bottle (don't forget eye contact later); or prop the baby on your slanted forelegs, like in an infant seat, and give the bottle while looking at him (see photo).



Try different times

Try bottle-feeding when the baby is not too hungry. Or try when the baby is hungry and might be willing to accept anything. Try putting the bottle in the baby's mouth when he is drowsy or sleeping.

Offer a cup

Skip the bottle and go to a cup. Even preemie babies have successfully used a cup, so any baby can learn this. Use a small cup, shot glass, egg cup, soft plastic bowl, medicine cup, spoon or anything similar.

When offering cups to infants, allow the baby to pace the feeding. **Do not pour milk into the baby's mouth!** Place the cup on the lip with the fluid just at the rim of the cup. The baby's tongue will come forward and sip or lap the milk.



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