



Introducing the Bottle

Once you have learned how to express your breast milk, you will need to teach your baby to drink it from a bottle. Many mothers find that this works better if someone else offers the baby the bottle at first, somewhere other than where he usually breastfeeds. (That way, he will have none of the usual cues to start seeking out the breast.) Clearly, this is an excellent time to enlist the aid of your partner or other loved one who has been eager to feed him, or perhaps to invite the baby's future caregiver to start establishing a feeding relationship with him.



During the first few attempts, have this person offer about ½ ounce of breast milk an hour or two after a regular feeding, when your baby is alert and motivated to try this new feeding method but not so hungry that he's upset and frantic. The adult should take care to keep a calm and reassuring manner. A smiling face and soothing voice will help your baby relax. It sometimes helps to drip a little familiar-tasting breast milk on the baby's lips or tongue at first to give him an idea of what you are doing. Then slowly and gently introduce the nipple into his mouth. Your baby should be allowed to explore the nipple with his mouth, not have it forced past his gums. Stop the attempt if he becomes frustrated or if more than ten minutes pass and he hasn't fed. It's better to end on a positive note and try again the next day than to create an association between this new method of feeding and feelings of frustration.

If after a few daily attempts he still refuses to drink from the container you've offered, try changing to a different kind of nipple or from a bottle to a cup. (If your baby uses a pacifier, he may prefer a similar nipple for bottle-feeding. Otherwise, you may have to experiment with several types of nipples until you find one he likes.) Some babies are particular about which feeding method they'll accept, but once they are introduced to one they like, they adjust easily. Your baby may show a preference for a small medicine cup or a sippy cup rather than a bottle, even if he is very young. Be aware of your baby's cues and respond accordingly, but don't give up on any one type of feeding device until you've tried it for several days.

As your baby shows signs of accepting an alternative feeding method, start expressing more milk and occasionally offering the bottle or cup when he acts hungry between feedings. Finally, offer him (or have another adult give him) an occasional full, regular feeding with a cup or bottle at a time of day when eventually you expect to be absent. In this way, you can create a daily pattern that will be familiar to your baby by the time you need to implement it.

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