



Help! My Baby Won't Take a Bottle

Please note: this handout is intended for breastfed babies being introduced to a bottle for the first time, or more consistently. This is not intended for bottle fed babies with sudden bottle aversion.

Some initial thoughts:

- If your baby is older than 6 months and introduction of the bottle isn't going well, you may be able to skip it all together and work towards cup drinking!
- Introduction of a bottle can be hard. It does not mean you've done anything wrong. Patience is key. Take your time and try to not get stuck in the numbers and volumes.
- If weight gain is a concern, consult your pediatrician and/or SLP for more specific information.

Tips for Bottle Feeding from a Speech Language Pathologist & Certified Lactation Counselor:

- Catch baby before they're overly hungry. Try to offer the bottle at the first hunger cues.
- Play around with temperature. Usually warm milk is best accepted, however some do prefer it cold!
- Have reasonable expectations. A breastfed baby may never take more than 4-5 ounces every 2-3 hours. Don't compare to formula fed babies who take much higher volumes at larger time gaps with age.
- Watch the flow. Breastfed babies may stay on a Level 1 or Slow Flow nipple until they wean at one year of age. There's no need to increase flow rate with age unless bottle nipple is collapsing or significant frustration is noted.
- Try different positions. A cradle is often associated with nursing. Try baby facing you in your lap, sitting up on a support pillow, facing away from you, or side lying.
- Stop and calm baby if they become frustrated. Take a break, walk around, calm baby and try again. Limit to 10 minutes of trying if bottle is not accepted. If frustration continues, stop and retry at a later feed.
- Offer a bottle nipple for baby to explore, play with, and suck on without a bottle attached to increase their familiarity.
- Introduce bottle nipple at the upper lip and wait for their mouth to open. Follow their cues and pace as needed.
- Marketing can be tricky. Typically, the "best" bottles for breastfed babies are: Dr. Brown's, Lansinoh, Evenflo Wide or Narrow Neck. Look for gradual transition from nipple top to base to encourage wider latch.
- Try syringe feeding if needed. Consult a feeding therapist for support.
- Be consistent. Try a bottle a day and watch for changes.

If difficulties continue, consult a feeding therapist to rule out oral motor function concerns. We will get through this together!