

How to “Pace Feed” a bottle fed baby

A supportive strategy for responsive bottle feeding

Any baby receiving expressed human milk, or artificial formula milk by bottle, should always be fed slowly and carefully, whilst holding the baby close and providing lots of eye contact and human interaction, why? Because this is the norm and supports normal physiological development.

How to bottle feed a baby correctly is often not taught to families and may not be something you have thought of, especially if you initially intended to breastfeed.

Paced bottled feeding is appropriate for all bottle-fed babies regardless of whether it is expressed breastmilk or formula milk in the bottle, as this feeding style supports the baby’s normal physiology.

Although feeds in a bottle are more easily measured, bottle fed baby’s often regurgitate some quantity of the feed. 4 oz per feed is usually all that is needed when fed in a paced feeding style. Allowing the baby to stop feeding when they have had enough and feed them again when they show signs of hunger.

Responsive Feeding

Responsive feeding means to feed a baby whenever their cues indicate that they are hungry, not to a pre-determined schedule.

It is particularly important that all babies are held frequently not just when they are being fed. This avoids them being trained to eat in order to be held.

Young babies should have their feeds divided into a minimum of 8 feeds in 24 hours, NOT 6 (or even 5) larger feeds as indicated on a formula milk packet! Remember this feeding regime is a marketing ploy that is designed to increase sales of formula milk.

Small frequent feeds are a lot better for your babies digestion and will help avoid symptoms of wind and reflux.

How to bottle feed using paced feeding technique:

- ✓ All babies should be held in an upright position when feeding from a bottle. Feeding laying down forces a fast flow of milk and is associated with increased frequency of ear infections.
- ✓ As with breastfeeding it is important to switch which side the baby is fed from. This encourages normal muscle development of the head and neck. Choose a midway point in the feed to switch, so that the baby does not develop a side preference.
- ✓ A whole feed should take at least 15-20 minutes, this is a minimum! Many babies will take a lot longer when allowed to take it at their own pace. By feeding at an appropriate speed the baby will recognise when it has had enough, before the stomach becomes over filled, causing discomfort and vomiting.

- ✓ Gently invite the baby to take the bottle teat into the mouth, so that baby controls when the feed begins. Stroke baby's upper lip with the teat to illicit the rooting reflex. When the baby is ready and opens the mouth wide, allow the baby to "accept" the teat. Do not force the teat into the baby's mouth.
- ✓ With the baby held close and upright, the bottle should be held horizontal with just enough milk in the teat to cover the hole.
- ✓ As soon as the baby starts to drink, milk will be delivered. Provide your baby with frequent pauses by lowering the bottle in the baby's mouth or taking it out of the mouth completely.
- ✓ Allow the baby to drink in short bursts, giving frequent breaks consistent with a breastfed rhythm; we are trying to mimic how the breast releases milk and not overwhelm the baby with the fast flow.
- ✓ Frequent pauses also discourage the baby taking the whole bottle down too quickly and supports the baby to recognise when they are full.
- ✓ If your baby is a healthy term infant that is gaining weight as expected, do not force them to finish the milk in the bottle, allow them to stop feeding when they have had enough.
- ✓ You will need to estimate how much milk to put in the bottle to avoid having to discard too much at the end. No more than 4oz should be needed at each feed.
- ✓ If you are using both breastmilk and infant formula during the same feed, then always use the breast milk first then follow with formula, so that any milk that is discarded with not be breastmilk.

Signs that the milk flow is too fast:

- ✓ **Widening of the eyes**
- ✓ **Farrowing of the brow**
- ✓ **Turning or pulling away**

Signs that the baby has had enough:

- ✓ **Turning away from the teat**
- ✓ **No longer rooting when the bottle is placed to the lips**
- ✓ **Appearing distracted or disinterested.**
- ✓ **Slowing their suckling down**
- ✓ **Falling asleep**

The benefits of paced bottle-feeding:

The baby will consume a volume appropriate to their size and age, rather than over or under eating.

Avoiding over feeding will help to reduce reflux and colic-like symptoms as the baby will not have had it's stomach over filled, causing discomfort.