

Patient information leaflet for use in Maternity Services: Top Tips for bottle feeding your baby responsively



What is responsive bottle feeding?

- Responsive bottle feeding is when parents respond to their baby's cues / signs that their baby is showing them they are hungry. These include waking up from a sleep, moving head and mouth and sucking fingers. Crying is the last sign of wanting to feed to try to feed your baby before they start to cry.
- Babies will feel more secure if most feeds are given by their parents / care-givers only, this will help you to build a close and loving relationship with your baby which will enhance bonding and support healthy brain development.
- Bottle feeds can be given in skin-to-skin contact with lots of eye contact from their parents/care-givers. Keep baby close to you during feeds and enjoy lots of cuddles. It's impossible to spoil your newborn baby.

When you offer the bottle in response to feeding cues, gently invite the baby to take the teat, pace the feeds and avoid forcing the baby to finish the feed, bottle-feeding can be as enjoyable and stress-free for the baby as possible, as well as reduce the risk of overfeeding.

Paced bottle feeding technique:

- Always hold your baby close to you and look into their eyes when feeding. This helps your baby feel safe and loved.
- Try to hold your baby fairly upright, with their head supported in a comfortable, neutral position so they can breathe and swallow comfortably.
- Brush the teat against their lips and when they open their mouth wide with their tongue down; allow them to draw the teat in.
- Hold the bottle horizontal to the ground; tilting it just enough to ensure your baby is taking milk, not air, through the teat. Babies feed in bursts of sucking with short pauses. In this position, when your baby pauses the milk will stop flowing, allowing them to have a short rest before starting to suck again.
- Your baby may need short breaks during the feed; they may also need to burp sometimes. When your baby does not want any more feed, hold them upright and **gently** rub or pat their back to bring up any wind. Continue feeding when they seem more comfortable and only if they show signs of still being hungry.
- Interrupting the feed from time to time also gives your baby a chance to register how 'full' they are. Look out for your baby's cues that they have had enough milk. Don't try to force them to take more than they want.



You should always hold your baby during bottle-feeds. Never leave your baby unattended while feeding from a bottle.

What milk should I give my baby?

- If you are giving your baby infant formula, **First Stage Infant Formula** is the **only** formula they need in their first year of life. It doesn't matter which brand you use because first stage infant formula is regulated so they are made to be similar.
- Bottle fed babies can have a combination of breastmilk via bottle and first stage infant formula. If combination / mixed feeding, always offer expressed breastmilk and infant formula separately. Do not mix them together in the same bottle.
- At 1 years old, your baby can move onto full fat cows milk. They do not require follow on milks or toddler milks.
- Specialist formula milks should only be used on a health professionals advice.
- Using any of the 'follow on' 'hungry baby' 'anti colic' and 'growing up' milks are not recommended and they can cause issues such as constipation.

Preparing bottle feeds:

- **Clean and sterilise** your feeding equipment and preparation area thoroughly between every feed to help to reduce the risk of infection. Whichever sterilisation method you chose to use, please follow the manufacturer's guidelines and ask your midwife or health visitor if you are unsure.
- Powdered infant formula milk is not sterile, so it is important to prepare each feed freshly and carefully to reduce the risk of your baby getting an infection.
- **Use tap water only** – do not use a purifier, water filter or bottled water.
- **Boil** 1 litre of fresh water in the kettle each time you make up a bottle, leave the water to cool for no longer than 30 minutes (just enough time to sit down with a cup of tea or coffee!). This ensures the water will be over 70°C which is the temperature needed to kill any bacteria that may be present in powdered milk.
- Follow the packaging instructions regarding quantities of water to powder. Pour the required **water into the bottle first** and then use the scoop leveller to add the correct number of level scoops of formula. Apply the lid, shake gently, then cool quickly by placing the bottle under a cold running tap or in a jug of cold water.
- Check the temperature of the milk before giving it to your baby to ensure it is no warmer than body temperature.
- If using Ready-made formula, follow the preparation and storage guidance on the packaging as not all brands have the same guidance. This is often the easiest milk to use when you are away from home.
- Check out First Steps Nutrition and UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative for all the detailed advice and guidance you will need on safely bottle feeding your baby
<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/parents-carers>
[Bottle feeding resources - Baby Friendly Initiative \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org/uk/baby-friendly)



Perfect Prep machines

Some people use 'Perfect Prep' machines to make up formula feeds. **We strongly advise you against using these machines** because they deliver a small volume

(‘shot’) of very hot water and then add cool water to make up the rest of the feed. This is **not** a sufficient temperature to kill the bacteria in formula milk and your baby may become unwell.

