



Infant Bottle Refusal

If you are nursing we recommend waiting until your baby is 4 weeks old and breastfeeding is well established before introducing a bottle. If you're returning to work, start bottle-feeding at least two weeks before your start date so you both have time to adjust. Sucking milk from a bottle requires different mouth and tongue movements than breastfeeding.

Try these tips for a smooth transition:

- **Offer him a bottle in the evening after his regular feeding** to get him used to the nipple. Start with a small amount of breast milk – about half an ounce.
- **Let someone else feed him the first bottle.** If you try to give your baby his first bottle, he may wonder why he's not getting your breast. He may be less confused if someone else makes the introduction. Ask your mother, your partner, a childcare provider, or a friend to help.
- **Try a wide mouth base with a slow-flow nipple and pace bottle feed.** This allows the baby to control the flow in his or her mouth without gagging or choking. Plus, it allows for better transition from the bottle to the breast because the baby still has to work to help get the milk out.



- **Express some milk.** Try expressing a little breastmilk onto the nipple of the bottle so that they get the taste right away.
- **Encourage mom's scent.** Infants can't see too well and are reassured by their mother's scent. Try taking a shirt that mom wore recently and place it by the baby while feeding.
- **Milk temperature.** Babies are used to their milk at 98.6 F if the breastmilk is too cold the baby may refuse it. Always test it on your wrist to avoid scalding.
- **Hold the baby in positions.** Try feeding in a breastfeeding cradle hold, facing out, facing you, or walking around.
- **Make sure you are pumping.** It is important that you are pumping during this time so that your body doesn't start to discontinue that feeding. Remember supply and demand.
- **Try to be out of the house.** A baby can smell his mother, even from a distance, so he may know that you (and your breasts) are just in the next room.

- **Keep a routine.** Once the baby takes a bottle, try giving a bottle every day. This will keep them in the routine of it. Just make sure you are pumping while the baby is taking a bottle or shortly afterwards.
- **Try a sippy cup.** This works really well for babies 4 months and older. This can include a regular sippy cup or a toddler cup with a straw.
- **Formula supplementation.** If you have to supplement with formula because you don't have enough breastmilk, try mixing some expressed breastmilk with the formula so the baby gets use to the taste of the formula. You can try mixing it half and half to start.

Written by Darnetta Yusko CRNP, IBCLC