



Transitioning to Bottle Feeding



Why should I introduce my baby to bottle feeding?

If you are returning to work after your maternity leave and have a trusted individual helping to care for your baby, introducing him/her to bottle feeding can help with a smoother transition.

It is normal for babies who are exclusively fed via direct breastfeeding, to not immediately accept the milk bottle. They may also need some time to accept a different feeder. Providing your baby with ample time to familiarise himself/herself with the milk bottle and the caregiving at infant care or by a trusted individual will reduce stress for both parents and baby.

Will introducing the milk bottle cause my baby to reject breastfeeding?

It is a common misconception that babies will reject breastfeeding after being introduced to the milk bottle.

Your baby will not get confused as breastfeeding and bottle feeding are two different feeding methods. However, they can and do develop preferences for either. The timing in introducing the milk bottle is important to aid your baby in accepting both feeding methods.

Bottle feeding should be introduced when:

- + Your baby is between 4 and 6 weeks old
- + Your baby has developed a good latch for direct breastfeeding
- + Your milk supply is established

All babies are born with a sucking reflex to help them feed immediately after birth. This reflex fades between 4 and 8 weeks of age and your baby will then have more control over his/her sucking technique. Hence, introducing the milk bottle at 4 to 6 weeks of age, with the presence of the sucking reflex, will increase the chance of a successful introduction.



Will introducing the milk bottle cause my breast milk supply to drop?



It is important to continue expressing breast milk regularly while your baby drinks from the milk bottle. When there is less milk expression from the breast (due to any reason, including reduced duration of direct latching), the milk volume produced may decrease.

To help with this transition and the maintenance of a healthy milk volume:

- You can start with one bottle feed per day. When your baby drinks from the bottle, make it a priority to express breast milk during this time.
- As you increase the number of milk bottle feeds to prepare your baby for infant care and/or your return to work, it is important to continue expressing milk at the feed intervals of your child to maintain a healthy milk volume (i.e. if your baby feeds every 3 hours, you should express milk once every 3 to 4 hours).
- You may start to gradually increase the number of milk bottle feeds 2 to 4 weeks before the commencement of infant care/your return to work.

You can also continue to breastfeed after returning home from work to continue building the established mother-child bond. This also helps to effectively clear the milk ducts, maintain a healthy milk supply and it is a hassle-free way to feed your baby after a day of dealing with breast pumps!

Which milk bottles should I use?

+ Wide-based Bottle Teats

It is advisable to start with a bottle teat that is wide, similar to the shape of a human breast. These bottles tend to have short teat height and it requires your baby to take a larger amount of the teat into his/her mouth, making the experience similar to breastfeeding.

Some examples are:



Pigeon Softouch
Peristaltic Plus



Tommee Tippee
Closer to Nature



Philips Avent
Natural Baby Bottle



Dr Brown's
Options+
Wide-Neck Baby
Bottle

Images by Pigeon, Tommee Tippee, Philips Avent and Dr Brown's respectively.

+ Slow-flow Bottle Teats

These bottles help to provide a bottle feeding experience that is closer to breastfeeding. Babies who breastfeed are typically used to working for their milk – it only comes out as they actively suck. Bottle feeding on a faster-flowing teat, on the other hand, allows for less effort and makes feeding easy.

When your baby gets used to the faster milk flow with less effort required, it will make breastfeeding more frustrating. This can result in them preferring bottle feeding over breastfeeding.

Some babies can be picky when it comes to the milk bottle as each brand has its own softness and texture that is unique. Start with one brand and a type of teat first for at least 2 to 3 days before trying a different one, should your baby reject it. This allows you to assess if your baby is simply developing the skill required for bottle feeding or rejecting that specific milk bottle teat.

How should I start introducing the milk bottle to my baby?

+ Choose the Right Time

Your baby should not be too hungry or fussy so as to allow him/her time to be more accepting of the change in feeding method. Imagine being given a food container with a complicated lid when you are very hungry... You will be too hungry to try and figure out how you can open the container. This is the same for your baby. When he/she is overly hungry and fussy, a familiar feeding method would be much preferred (i.e. breastfeeding).

+ Assign Someone to Introduce the Milk Bottle

Either your partner, your parents or in-laws, or the assigned caregiver should be the one to introduce the milk bottle to your baby. Your baby has established that milk comes from your breasts. When you introduce milk from the bottle, he/she may continue to seek the breast instead of accepting the bottle.

+ Stay Out of Sight

Sometimes you may need to be away from your baby's sight when he/she is being bottle-fed by someone else. When you are in sight, your baby may continue to seek milk from you due to the established association that you are the provider of milk.



How do I bottle feed my baby properly?

- + Ensure that the milk is warmed to the same temperature as the human body, i.e. 36 to 37°C.
- + Position your baby in a 45-degree angle by cradling him/her in your arm.
- + You should be comfortably seated with some pillows or an arm rest to rest your arms on.
- + Introduce the milk bottle by lightly stroking the corner of your baby's lip and wait for him/her to latch on.
- + Hold the milk bottle in place as your baby bottle feeds.



- + Follow your baby's lead and sucking pace. Do not shake or tap the milk bottle to encourage him/her to drink faster. This can break your baby's concentration or the suction seal that he/she has created over the milk bottle teat.
- + When your baby stops actively sucking to breathe, do not force him/her to continue drinking. Wait for him/her to show readiness to complete the milk feed, i.e. searching for the milk bottle and latching on to the milk bottle teat on his/her own.
- + You may use these moments when baby stops sucking to help baby burp.

What should I do if my baby rejects the milk bottle?

When this happens, it is important to be patient with your baby, yourself and the other caregivers.

- + Do not force feed your baby. Force feeding will create negative experiences with the milk bottle and result in complete rejection.
- + Breastfeed your baby for this feed and try bottle feeding again the next day or at the next possible feed.
- + Have the milk bottle ready in a warm water bath to keep the milk warm. As soon as your baby starts to stir for a feed, pick him/her up gently and offer the milk bottle without too long a delay. This is because, when your baby becomes hungrier and more aware, he/she may seek for his/her mother, not just for nutrition but comfort as well.



- + If your baby shows signs of distress such as body arching or heavy protest against the milk bottle feed, he/she should be returned to you for breast feeding. Try bottle feeding again the next day or at the next possible feed.
- + Try a specific milk bottle and teat for 2 to 3 days. If your baby continues to reject the milk bottle feeds, try a different milk bottle brand and teat.

A Note to Mommies:

Returning to work and/or starting your child in infant care are big and stressful milestones in motherhood. It is also a change that can sometimes alter the course of the feeding journey you had envisioned for you and your child.

When this happens, it is important to remember that fed is best. Bonding occurs in the presence of positive feeding experiences, regardless of the type of milk (breast or formula milk) and mode of delivery (direct latching or bottle feeding).

When in doubt, please do not hesitate to approach your child's lactation consultant and/or paediatrician.

NUH Feeding and Nutrition Clinic

NUH Feeding and Nutrition Clinic is part of the Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute at National University Hospital. The multidisciplinary team, consisting of paediatricians, dietitians, psychologists and speech therapists, provides a one-stop assessment clinic of your child's feeding skills and behaviours as well as feeding interactions with your family.



Scan or visit
for.sg/nuh-feeding-clinic
for information.

About the National University Centre for Women and Children

National University Centre for Women and Children (NUWoC) is a national university specialist centre that aims to empower women, children and their families to lead healthier lives. We provide comprehensive medical and surgical services ranging from pre-conception to child and maternal health.

NUWoC comprises the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) and Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI) of National University Hospital. It focuses on the right-siting of appropriate services in the community and builds complementary services in National University Health System's (NUHS) centres of excellence – Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Alexandra Hospital.

Through a generous gift from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat, KTP-NUCMI established an integrated outpatient facility with medical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services for children. We are also the only public specialist centre in Singapore that offers paediatric kidney and liver transplant programmes.

For more information about us, visit www.nuh.com.sg/NUWoC.

Contact Us

Emergency (24-hr)

Location: NUH Main Building, Zone F, Level 1
Contact: +65 6772 5000

Women's Clinic – Emerald/Ruby

Location: NUH Kent Ridge Wing, Zone D, Level 3, D03-06
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 6.00pm (Mon to Thu), 8.30am – 5.30pm (Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Women's Clinic – Sapphire

Location: NUH Kent Ridge Wing, Zone D, Level 3, D03-03
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 6.00pm (Mon to Thu), 8.30am – 5.30pm (Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Women's Clinic – Jade [Former Clinic G]

Location: NUH Kent Ridge Wing, Zone C, Level 3, C03-02
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 6.00pm (Mon to Thu), 8.30am – 5.30pm (Fri)
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Fetal Care Centre

Location: NUH Kent Ridge Wing, Zone D, Level 3, D03-04
Operating Hours: 8.00am – 5.30pm (Mon to Thu), 8.00am – 5.00pm (Fri)
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Clinic for Human Reproduction

Location: NUH Kent Ridge Wing, Zone D, Level 4
Operating Hours: 8.00am – 5.00pm (Mon to Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)

Women's Clinic @ JMC

Location: Jurong Medical Centre, Level 2
Operating Hours: 8.50am – 11.30pm (Tue & Thu), 2.00pm – 5.00pm (Mon & Fri)

Jurong Clinic for Women

Location: 130 Jurong Gateway, #01-231
Operating Hours: 9.00am – 12.00pm, 2.00pm – 5.00pm (Mon to Sat), 6.00pm – 9.00pm (Mon to Thu)
General Enquiry: +65 6665 4277
Appointment Line: +65 6908 2222
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

GS @ NTFGH

Location: Clinic A73 & A74 Surgery, Tower A – NTFGH, Level 7
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
Appointment Line: +65 6908 2222
Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg



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