

Paced Bottle-Feeding



Women's Birth &
Wellness Center

PRIMARY CARE • MATERNITY • LACTATION

What is paced bottle-feeding?

Paced bottle-feeding is a way of feeding your baby with a bottle that imitates breastfeeding. It also allows your baby to pace the feeding and control how much milk she drinks.

Why use paced bottle-feeding?

Your baby may need supplements to grow well or you may be leaving your baby in the care of someone else. Paced bottle feeding will help protect your breastfeeding relationship when a bottle is used for feedings. It can also help minimize colic-like symptoms.

How is paced bottle-feeding done?

1. Select a bottle and nipple that resembles your own breast and nipple, preferably with a long, round nipple. Choose a slow flow nipple to imitate the slower flow of the breast.
2. Feed your baby when her cues indicate hunger, rather than on a schedule.
3. Hold her in an upright or side-lying position for feeding, not in the cradle position typically associated with bottle-feeding. Be sure her ears, shoulder and hips are all aligned.
4. When you introduce the bottle, stroke your baby's lips from top to bottom just like it was your own nipple. Let her draw the nipple into her mouth so that she can control when the feed begins.
5. Just like on the breast, encourage her to pull the nipple into the back of her mouth near the soft palate. Once she is sucking, hold the bottle horizontal to the floor.
6. Feed her for 20-30 seconds then pull the bottle down but not out of her mouth. When she begins sucking more vigorously again, lift the bottle back to horizontal. This approach mimics the natural rhythm of breastfeeding. Continue like this until she shows signs of being full.
7. Switch her from side to side midway through a feed. This provides for eye stimulation and development, and keeps her from developing a preference for one side over the other.
8. It's very important to pay attention to your baby's feeding cues and feed her until she shows signs of being done, no further. Drowsiness and releasing the bottle nipple before it's empty indicate that she is finished. There will often be a small amount of milk in the bottle when she's done – no need to jiggle the bottle or wake her up to get her to take that last little bit.