

Why Avoid Propped Bottle Feeding

Propped bottle feeding is when a caregiver bottle feeds a baby without holding them. The bottle is propped or held up by an object, like a pillow or blanket. This is unsafe, even if the caregiver is close by.

Reasons To Avoid Propped Bottle Feeding

Higher chance of choking or trouble breathing

- If you prop a bottle and go do something else, you are not able to watch your baby closely. If your baby is not ready for the extra liquid flowing or if the bottle is not removed, your baby can choke.
- If your baby falls asleep before finishing the bottle, they may breathe in the liquid (aspirate), rather than swallow it
- When your baby is leaning back or lying down, liquid can go down the wrong tube to the lungs rather than the stomach

Feeding is more than just eating

- Feeding, especially for young babies, is the most frequent parent - child interaction
- Propped bottle feeding misses the opportunity for warm and loving interaction between you and your baby – holding your baby while feeding helps to develop a close bond
- Following a baby's hunger and fullness cues is an important part of caregiving – a baby may stop giving signs if their signs are not being responded to

It is illegal to sell propped bottle systems that promote unsupervised feedings in Canada



Higher chance of overfeeding

- Since the liquid from a propped bottle keeps coming out until the bottle is empty, your baby may drink more than their body needs. This can cause baby to gain too much weight for their height.
- It can also make it hard to learn and follow your baby's hunger and fullness signs

Higher chance of ear infections

- Lying back or lying down while feeding causes liquid to pool in the back of the mouth. This liquid can back up into the ears through the tubes that run between their ears. Bacteria can then enter causing an ear infection.
- Frequent ear infections can lead to long term damage

Higher chance of tooth decay

- When the normal germs from the mouth mix with the liquid in the bottle, it produces an acid that can lead to tooth decay. This is more common with a propped bottle since the liquid pools in your baby's mouth.
- Baby teeth are important and hold the space for adult teeth. Baby teeth help your baby to chew and eat.



How To Bottle Feed Safely

- Hold your baby and the bottle when bottle feeding for safety
- Touch, talk and have eye contact while feeding
- Count your baby's sucks and swallows – if your baby does not take a breath every three to five sucks, remove the bottle and take a five second pause to let your baby breathe
- Follow and respond to cues to ensure a calm, comfortable feeding time

Follow Your Baby's Hunger And Fullness Signs

Follow to make sure your baby is feeding with a calm face and relaxed hands and arms

Signs that your baby may be hungry include:

- Restlessness
- Rooting (opening their mouth, sucking on contact)
- Sucking on a hand

Signs that your baby may be full include:

- Sucking action slows down
- Losing interest or letting go of the nipple
- Rooting will stop
- Turning head away

Your baby will drink more at some feeds and less at other feeds. Follow their hunger and fullness signs to feed them the amount they need. If you are unsure whether your baby is drinking enough, talk to your baby's health care provider.



Connect with a public health nurse at Niagara Parents



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