

PACED BOTTLE FEEDING

Which scenario sounds more appealing? Scarfing down your food so quickly that you end up overfull with indigestion or eating at a pace that allows you to take frequent pauses to actually enjoy your meal?

Hopefully, you've chosen to enjoy your meal! Like an adult that eats too fast, a baby who drinks too quickly from a bottle may feel overwhelmed. Signs of a bottle feeding baby being overwhelmed include: splayed hands, flared nostrils, grimacing, stiffening of arms and legs, milk that spills from the corner of baby's mouth, and pulling away from the bottle nipple.

In traditional bottle feeding where baby is placed in a reclining position with the bottle held upright it may look like your baby is very hungry as they eagerly gulp, but they may actually be trying to swallow quickly to avoid choking. This can be very unsafe for baby. Paced bottle feeding helps to slow the feeding so baby can suck, swallow and breathe without stress as well as mimic the way babies feed at the breast and allows the baby not the caregiver, to be in control of the feeds.

How it's done:

- Bring baby in close to your body and hold them in an upright position. You may need to support their head and neck with your hand.
- Bring the nipple to your baby's mouth, touch the corner of baby's mouth to stimulate rooting. Wait for baby to open wide before placing the nipple in their mouth and never force the bottle nipple into baby's mouth.
- Make sure that the bottle itself is horizontal to the floor. **THIS IS IMPORTANT!** Positioning the bottle in this way will help to control the flow. There should be milk in the tip of the nipple but it is not necessary for milk to fill the base of the nipple.
- Consider having baby suck a few times on just air or a minimal amount of milk in the nipple. This reinforces the idea that flow is not immediate and mimics feeds at the breast. Don't forget to burp baby frequently if using this technique.
- Allow baby to suck and swallow at their own pace for 3-5 sucks. Then gently tilt the bottle down, leaving the nipple in baby's mouth until baby stops sucking. Your baby may suck harder when you tip the bottle down and milk leaves the nipple, even though they need a breath. This is OK.
- This will allow the flow to stop but your baby will still know where to find the nipple. The nipple may also rest on baby's chin/cheek when giving pauses.
- Once baby resumes sucking, tilt the bottle back up and allow milk to fill the nipple once again.
- Repeat the process until baby is done with the feed.
- Allow the baby to determine when the feed is over. Don't force baby to drink every ounce unless they want to. It is important to respect when your baby is done with feeding and allow them to guide the process. As a breastfed baby releases the breast on their own when they are satiated, they should do the same with a bottle.

- Switch sides during bottle feeding. As in breastfeeding, this allows for stimulation of both sides of baby's body.
- Feeding should be a social experience. Make eye contact with baby and engage in "conversation."
- Feeding should be enjoyable and take at least 15-30 minutes.
- Don't fret about what type of bottle or nipple should be used. Every baby is different and there are dozens of kinds on the market. We often encourage families to look for slow-flow nipples.

Ask your nurse or a lactation consultant for assistance if you feel you need help. There are also many helpful videos online. Simply search "Paced Bottle Feeding."