



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Making the choice to bottle feed your baby

Patient information

Any breastfeeding is valuable, and we support mothers to help their baby receive as much breast milk as they can. Formula milk does not provide the same benefits for your baby that breast milk can, such as protection against illness and infection. Although we encourage all mothers to breastfeed because of the health benefits for mothers and babies, we know that some mothers may be unable to, or choose not to, breastfeed. If you are unable to fully breastfeed, or choose not to, we will provide the support you need in order to bottle feed as safely as possible. Your Midwife will discuss the health benefits of breast milk and risks of formula milk with you so that you can make informed choices. Please let them know if you prefer not to have this conversation.

If you make the informed choice to feed with formula you will be offered the opportunity to discuss how to make up a feed safely. In addition you will be given the leaflet below which will have details on how to sterilise and make up feeds correctly. Even if you have bottle fed before please check as some of the advice may have changed.

Remember that powdered milk is not sterile and can cause infections if made up in advance. Therefore you will need to make up feeds as needed, even at night.

## Getting bottle feeding off to the best start and pace feeding

Pace feeding is when you hold your babies bottle horizontal to the ground, tilted just enough to ensure your baby is taking milk, not air, through the teat. Babies feed in bursts of sucking with short pauses to rest. In this position, when your baby pauses for a rest the milk will stop flowing, allowing him to have a short rest before starting to suck again.

### **Pace bottle feeding has the following benefits:**

- Reduces stomach issues associated with overfeeding or eating too quickly.
- Encourages easier switching between the breast and bottle by slowing the flow from the bottle.
- Encourages more focus on hunger cues and responsiveness from parents.

Watch for signs that your baby needs a break, remove the bottle and wind him / her.

Never force a baby to take a full feed as this will affect their appetite control and may lead to health problems later in life.

Limit the number of people who feed your baby – aim for you and one other person, so that the pleasurable feelings associated with feeding are linked to you and that person. Safe bottle-feeding also means feeding in a way that encourages a close relationship between parents and baby. Feeding times are a good opportunity for you to have your baby close to you and for you to bond with

each other. Babies who have a strong attachment to their parents feel secure and loved which helps them to be calmer and grow into more confident children and adults.

Never leave your baby unattended with a bottle.

## **What to bring into hospital if you are bottle feeding**

If you make the choice to bottle feed, please bring in your own starter pack of ready-made infant formula, suitable from birth. We do not supply infant formula in hospital unless it is needed for a medical reason. However we do supply disposable sterile bottles and teats. There are several brands of infant formula however there is no evidence that one company's formula is better for your baby than any other.

To reduce waste, small cartons or bottles are best, as milk can only be refrigerated for 24 hours once opened. You will need to bring ready-to-feed infant formula as we do not have the facilities for the safe preparation or storage of powdered formula.

Always choose first infant formula milk suitable from birth. You can continue to give this milk when your baby starts to have solid foods. It is not advisable to give any other type of milk to young babies, such as 'hungry baby formulas'. Discuss with your midwife or health visitor if you feel you need to give your baby anything other than first milk. Cow's milk should only be given to your baby after they are 12 months old.

## Early days

When your baby is born we encourage you to spend time in direct skin to skin contact. This has many known benefits for you and baby regardless of your feeding journey. Skin to skin is a lovely way for you to welcome your new baby and to calm you both. It helps to form close bonds. Skin to skin can be most beneficial during the 'golden hour' or the first one to two hours after birth or until the baby has had their first feed, however you can keep your baby in skin to skin contact for as long as you want. Skin to skin contact can still be beneficial in the weeks and months after the birth. If you are unable to have your baby in skin contact straight after birth we will encourage you to do this as soon as you are both able.

## Feeding your baby responsively

Although normal newborn behaviour means that babies feed very frequently, it may not be appropriate to offer formula feeds as frequently as breastfeeds because of the risks of over feeding. You will be offered support to feed your baby in a responsive way and encouraged to:

- Follow your baby's feeding cues rather than trying to adhere to strict routines or 'watching the clock'.
- Hold your baby close when feeding so that you can look into his or her eyes. Feeding in skin-to-skin contact helps your baby feel safe and secure.
- Your baby will take small feeds to begin with, around 15-30 mls at each feed, but every baby is different.

## Mixing bottle feeding and breastfeeding

Giving infant formula to a breastfed baby will reduce your breast milk supply. Bottle feeding will make it harder for your baby to learn to feed at your breast. If you mix bottle feeding and breastfeeding, you are likely to stop breastfeeding sooner than if you just breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed your baby. If you have not previously breastfed, or you have stopped breastfeeding, it is usually possible to try starting again at any time. Your midwife will discuss this further with you.

## Resources:

### Guide to bottlefeeding:

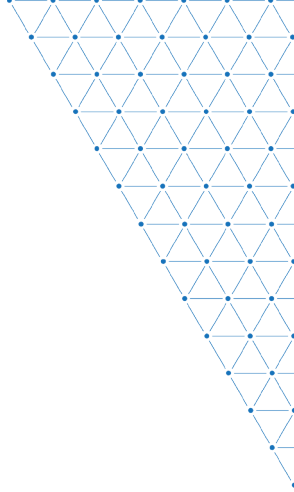
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### Responsive bottlefeeding:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/relationship-building-resources/responsive-feeding-infosheet/>

### Formula Guide for Parents:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources/infant-formula-responsive-bottle-feeding-guide-for-parents/>



**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care  
in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath**

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