

If you've made the decision to bottle feed your baby, there are some important things to know!

Bottle Basics

- The two most common bottle options are glass or plastic. If using plastic, choose one that is labeled BPA-free. BPA is a chemical in some plastics that scientists believe can harm a baby's development¹.
- Check the bottles and their parts frequently for signs of wear. As soon as it looks worn or chipped, replace it. **Cracks in the bottles or nipples can harbor bacteria that can make your baby sick.**
- Nipples also come in many shapes and sizes. You'll want to pay attention to the nipple size and flow for your baby's age. Flow² is the rate your baby gets formula through the nipple. Most brands have suggested ages for each nipple. Look at the packaging or website for guidance.
- Cleaning and sanitizing bottles is important. You'll need to disassemble all parts. You can use a dishwasher or warm soapy water to wash them. Allow everything to air dry. And unless you use a heated dry cycle on your dishwasher, the CDC recommends that you sanitize bottle parts before each use by boiling them in water for a few minutes or use a bottle sterilizer³. **And always wash your hands before touching any parts.**
- Formula today is safe and nutritious! The FDA regulates it to ensure it contains the important amounts of protein and fat, as well as 23 essential vitamins and minerals⁴. There are three types of formula to choose from⁵: Cow's milk-based formula, soy formula, and extensively hydrolyzed formula. When buying formula, be sure to check expiration dates, the condition of the container, and the age-range.
- You may want to buy formula that is iron fortified, because too little iron can cause anemia. You'll also choose between powder, liquid concentrates, or ready-to-use formula. This decision is based on convenience and cost. Do not make homemade formula. It is not safe or healthy for your baby. Also avoid feeding your baby cow's milk or alternative milks before 12 months of age.

Feeding Specifics⁶

Now let's look at how to prepare a bottle. First, always follow the directions on the formula container. Be sure your hands and all bottle parts are properly cleaned. Use a safe water source or bottled water to make formula. **Use the correct water-to-formula ratio because too much water dilutes the nutrition your baby needs, and too little can overload their digestive system and kidneys.**

You can prepare a bottle ahead of time, but it must be refrigerated immediately and used within 24 hours. You can heat the bottle by running it under warm water. Do not microwave a bottle. Once warmed, use or discard the bottle within two hours. If you're on the go, you can take a prepared bottle if it is kept cold. An ice pack or cooler can keep it cold for about two hours; otherwise, plan to make a fresh bottle when needed.

Quantity & Schedule

Scheduled Feedings: In general, newborns typically eat 1-2 ounces every 2-3 hours, including feedings in the middle of the night. From one to five months, your baby will need approximately 4 ounces of formula every 3-4 hours. When your baby weighs about 12 pounds, they typically drop night feedings. ⁷

By six months, they'll need 6-8 ounces of formula in 4-5 feedings throughout the day. These are just averages, so keep in mind that all babies are a little different!

Feeding Cues: Fortunately, babies show signs of hunger and fullness, so you can learn to respond to their cues. This is called responsive feeding, and it is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. **For babies under 6 months⁸, signs of hunger include putting hands to mouth, turning their head toward the breast, puckering or smacking lips, and clenching fists.** If you miss these cues, your baby will begin to cry. When they are full, young babies will close their mouths, turn away from the breast or bottle, and relax their hands.

Remember, your child doesn't need to finish every bottle to be well fed. If you're concerned about how much or little your baby is eating, talk to your provider.

Burping is another part of feeding. **Babies need to burp because they swallow air. It's a good idea to burp them after every 2-3 ounces of formula, and whenever they're showing signs of discomfort⁹. You can burp your baby in different positions, including leaning over your shoulder, sitting on your lap, or laying across your knees. Keep burp cloths handy because all babies spit up from time to time. Spitting up is normal and usually nothing to worry about.**

Other practical tips

Position during feeding is important too. Be sure your baby is in a semi-upright position, like a recliner chair, and not flat on their back. Lying flat puts them at risk for choking as well as middle ear infections¹⁰.

The most pleasurable part of feeding is the time you get to spend and bond with your baby. Cherish this time by rocking them and talking or singing, as well¹¹!

Finally, it's not too early to think about oral hygiene. Tooth decay can be a problem even for babies, especially with formula¹². **So, never allow your baby to go to sleep with a bottle or carry one around with them all day.** You can wipe their gums and mouth with a damp baby cloth.

Resources:

- 1 A. Rahman Zamani, MD, MPH, Risks Associated with Bisphenol A in Baby Bottles, Fact Sheets for Families, The University of California Childcare Health Program, University of California, San Francisco, <https://cchp.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tksrra181/f/BisphenolEn0908.pdf>, accessed on 9/20/21
- 2 Pados, B. F., Park, J., Thoyre, S. M., Estrem, H., & Nix, W. B. (2015). Milk Flow Rates From Bottle Nipples Used for Feeding Infants Who Are Hospitalized. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 24(4), 671–679. https://doi.org/10.1044/2015_ajslp-15-0011
- 3 How to Clean, Sanitize, and Store Infant Feeding Items. (2021). <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/healthychildcare/infantfeeding/cleansanitize.html>
- 4 Stevens, E. E., Patrick, T. E., & Pickler, R. (2009). A History of Infant Feeding. *Journal of Perinatal Education*, 18(2), 32–39. <https://doi.org/10.1624/105812409x426314>
- 5 Choosing an Infant Formula, The American Academy of Pediatrics, 9/16/2020, <https://healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Choosing-an-Infant-Formula.aspx>, accessed 9/21/21
- 6 CDC. (2021, May 19). Infant Formula Preparation and Storage. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/formula-feeding/infant-formula-preparation-and-storage.html>
- 7 How Much Milk Your Baby Needs. (2021). WIC Breastfeeding. <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-much-milk-your-baby-needs>
- 8 CDC. (2021, July 22). Signs Your Child is Hungry or Full. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/mealtime/signs-your-child-is-hungry-or-full.html>
- 9 Baby Burping. (n.d.). www.boystownpediatrics.org. <https://www.boystownpediatrics.org/knowledge-center/baby-burping>
- 10 Bottle Feeding Basics. (2021). HealthyChildren.org. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Bottle-Feeding-How-Its-Done.aspx>
- 11 Should I Breastfeed or Bottlefeed? (2021). HealthyChildren.org. https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/prenatal/decisions-to-make/Pages/Should-I-Breastfeed-or-Bottlefeed.aspx?_ga=2.33867940.444569177.1630534315-1418020388.1625260853&_gl=1*1te5ys4*_ga*MTQxODAyMDM4OC4xNjI1MjYwODUz*_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ*MTYzMDUzNDMxNC4zLjAuMTYzMDUzNDMxNi4w
- 12 How to Prevent Tooth Decay in Your Baby. (2021). HealthyChildren.org. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx>