

# Safe Feeding for Babies



**DO NOT** propped bottle feed.

Propped bottle feeding is when you bottle feed a baby without holding them, and the bottle is being propped (or held up) by another object (like a pillow or blanket).

This is unsafe, even if you or a caregiver are close by.



## 1 Choking and aspiration

If you prop a bottle and then go do something else, you aren't able to watch your baby closely. If your baby is not ready for the extra liquid flowing they 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.

## 2 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 their ears through the tubes that run between the throat and ears. Bacteria can then enter causing an ear infection.

Frequent ear infections can lead to long term damage.

## 3 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 also help your baby chew and eat.

## 4 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 an unexpected growth trend, such as high weight gain.

It can also make it harder to learn and follow your baby's hunger and fullness signs.

## 5 Less interaction

Nutrition is only part of the feeding experience. It provides the opportunity for a warm and loving interaction between you and your baby.

Holding your baby while feeding helps to develop a close bond.

## How to bottle feed safely

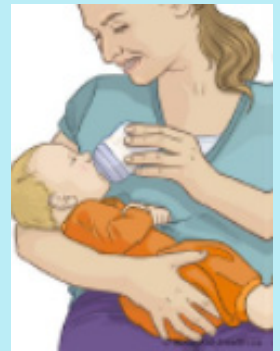
- Hold your baby and the bottle when bottle-feeding for safety and to feel secure.
- Touch, talk and have eye contact while feeding.
- Follow cues to make sure your baby is feeding with a calm face and relaxed hands and arms.
- Hold your baby almost fully upright (not in a laying down position). Keep the bottle parallel to the ground. Near the end of the feeding when there is less fluid, tip the bottle up.



## Follow hunger and fullness signs



Holding your baby and the bottle will make it easier to see their signs of hunger and fullness.



### Signs that your baby may be hungry include:

- Restlessness
- Rooting (opening mouth and searching to suck on something)
- Sucking on a hand

### Signs that your baby may be full include:

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

## Take care of gums and teeth

- Use a clean, soft, damp cloth to clean the baby's gums, inside of cheeks and roof of mouth. Do this every day.
- Once the baby has teeth, brush them gently, at least twice a day. Use a small, soft toothbrush and water.

