

# 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 slow the feeding so baby can suck, swallow and breathe without stress and allows the baby not the caregiver, to be in control of the feeds. Research shows that overfeeding reduces satiety cues; we know childhood obesity is on the rise, there is speculation that it starts back at the bottle.

## 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.
- 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. Let the baby take some breaths then watch for them to resume sucking.

- 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. This helps your baby learn to eat until full and stop.
- 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. The technique is more important than the bottle.



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