

# Bottle Feeding Your Baby: Birth to 6 Months

## Parents' Roles

### Learn your baby's hunger and fullness signs.

Let baby know the bottle is there by touching the nipple to their lips.

Wait until baby opens their mouth wide, then place the nipple gently and deeply into baby's mouth.

Respond to their hunger and full signs.

### Offer your baby human milk or formula

Human milk is the best choice for babies.

For babies who are not fed human milk, offer store-bought infant formula.

### Hold your baby while they feed.

Mimic breastfeeding / chestfeeding as much as possible. Switch sides with each feed.

Hold your baby close in an upright position, ideally safely skin-to-skin.

Hold the bottle and watch your baby while they are feeding. Never prop the bottle.

## Baby's Roles

### Decide when to drink.

Show you when they are hungry.

Decide when they want the feed to start.

Show you they need to take a rest break when they stop sucking.

### Decide whether or not to drink.

Decide whether they want to take the bottle or not.

### Decide how much to drink.

Show you when they are full.

Drink the amount that is right for them.

Baby's appetite can vary from day to day.

It is good for your baby to spend time each day to be held skin-to-skin. See our pamphlet [Safe Skin-to-Skin Cuddling](#) for how to do this safely.



## Early signs your baby is Hungry

- licking lips
- sucking on the tongue
- sucking fingers, theirs or yours
- bringing their hands to their mouth
- turning towards the person holding them and opening their mouth
- starting to fuss

Offer the bottle when they show these early signs of hunger. Crying is a late sign of hunger.

Babies show us when they are hungry and how much they want to eat. Feeding your baby when they are hungry helps them to follow their appetite, as well as to grow well.

## Signs your baby is Full

- sucking or swallowing slows
- pushing or turning away from the bottle
- closing mouth
- body is relaxed with arms and hands open
- falling asleep

Watch your baby while they feed. Stop feeding your baby when they show you they are full.

Never force your baby to finish a bottle.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Won't it spoil my baby if I let them feed when they want and stop when they want?*

Not at all. Feeding when they want to drink helps them to get all the nutrition they need when they need it. It helps them learn when they are hungry and when they are full. Responding to your baby's feeding pattern can help them grow to be confident eaters.

*I don't think my baby is getting enough milk. Is it okay to try to get my baby to drink more by jiggling the bottle?*

No. Your baby will show hunger signs if they are not getting enough. Stop feeding your baby when they show you they are full. Don't jiggle the bottle, "screw" the nipple into their mouth, or force them to take more. Trust your baby. They will drink what they need.

Follow your baby's appetite to know the number of bottles to prepare and offer. Newborns can drink as little as 30 mL (1 oz.) at a feeding. This will increase as they grow.

*My baby seems hungry before they are due for their next feed. Should I give them more at each feed? Should I add anything to the bottle?*

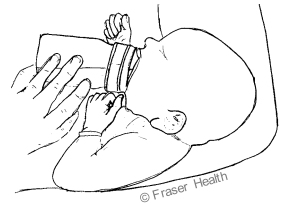
Instead of a feeding schedule, try to feed your baby whenever they show signs of hunger. Babies' appetites can vary day to day. It is normal for a baby to drink more or less depending on their growth rate. This changes often and is different for each baby.

Feed your baby only as much or as little as they want. Pushing them to drink more than they want can result in a fussy baby in the short term and eating issues in the future.

Babies aren't ready to eat solid food until they are about 6 months old. Do not add cereal or anything else to your baby's bottle. This is not safe.

*What else can I do to help my baby feed well?*

- Use a soft, round, slow-flow nipple.
- Choose straight instead of bent or curved bottles.
- Prepare just enough milk for your baby, based on past feeding amounts.
- Keep the bottle tipped up so that the milk covers the hole in the nipple.
- Tip the bottle down slightly when they pause in their sucking and leave the nipple in their mouth.
- Burp your baby about halfway through the feed and again at the end.
- Take about 10 to 20 minutes to feed (as it would if breastfeeding / chestfeeding).



### It's good to ask

If you have questions about **your child's nutrition**, call 8-1-1 anytime to speak to a registered dietitian at HealthLinkBC.

If you have questions about **your child's health**, contact your local Public Health Unit to speak to a public health nurse.

For more information on feeding your baby, go to [FraserHealth.ca](https://www.fraserhealth.ca). Search "bottle feeding tips" and select "Infant feeding" from the search results.

