

Responsive Feeding

A breastfeeding baby actively controls the rate of the feed.

A baby knows when he is hungry and gives signs to the parent or caregiver. A newborn baby moves his lips, puts out his tongue searching towards the smell of his mother's milk.

A newborn baby can coordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing. She can use a variety of sucking patterns to start the milk ejection reflex (short, rapid sucks), to transfer milk (deep, slower sucks), or when sucking for comfort (small, intermittent sucks).

A baby stops sucking when he has had enough and lets go of the breast. You cannot force a baby to suck at the breast if the baby does not want to. The baby actively leads the feed and the mother responds to the signals from the baby.

A baby fed by bottle has little control of the rate of feeding.

It can be difficult for the baby to control their suck, swallow and breathe cycle if the milk keeps flowing from the teat whether the baby wants it or not. The baby may seem very hungry and gulping down the milk when in fact she is trying to swallow rapidly so she does not choke.

The baby's inborn ability to stop feeding when he has had a enough (appetite regulation) is over-ridden if a caregiver jiggles the bottle to get more milk into the baby and does not respond to the baby's signs of satiety.

If a baby needs to be fed with a bottle, responsive or paced bottle feeding is more comfortable for the baby and can reduce the risk of later obesity.

- ♥ Watch the baby for signs of hunger rather than feeding to a strict schedule.
- ♥ Hold your baby upright, not lying back, and support her head and neck with your hand. Feed your baby skin-to-skin if possible.
- ♥ Gently stroke lips with the teat and let baby draw teat into his mouth, rather than pushing the teat into his mouth.
- ♥ Hold the bottle so only the teat tip is full of milk, aiming to keep the bottle level.
- ♥ Pause frequently, turn teat slightly and withdraw from baby's mouth. Let baby take a few breaths and when she roots again for the teat, let baby take the teat into her mouth. A bottle feed should take about 10-20 minutes. It is not a race to see how fast you can feed baby.
- ♥ If baby does not show interest in feeding more, respect what baby is telling you. Do not jiggle the teat to get the baby to finish the bottle.
- ♥ Remember to hold your baby close at times other than feeding also so that baby learns that holding doesn't always mean food.

More info: <http://kellymom.com/bf/pumpingmoms/feeding-tools/bottle-feeding/>

This is general information. Discuss your specific needs with your midwife, nurse, lactation consultant or doctor.

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