

# RESPONSIVE BOTTLE FEEDING

These brief education refresher sheets are designed for staff as a teaching aid during the coronavirus outbreak. Staff may include return to practice midwives or health visitors, students who have been fast-tracked to practice or health care assistants who have been redeployed into postnatal care within hospital or community settings. This information is an interim measure to help staff provide support and does not replace training. The links and information provided can be used by staff and shared with parents.

It is important to support parents or caregivers who have decided to bottle feed to do so in as safe and responsive a way as possible.

## GIVING INFANT FORMULA

Parents who are bottle feeding should be given information on using first infant formula (whey-based) for the first year of life.

All brands have a similar nutritional makeup to comply with legislation, so there is no need to spend extra on expensive brands and it is fine to swap brands of first infant formula. This is particularly important as parents may be concerned about obtaining infant formula at the current time.

## CLEANING AND STERILISING EQUIPMENT

Parents should be shown how to clean, sterilise and make up feeds correctly.



Washing infant feeding equipment in hot, soapy water prior to sterilisation is key as sterilisation won't work effectively if the bottles are not clean. Feeding equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and sterilised before and after each use.

Also ensure all surfaces where feeds will be prepared are routinely cleaned and disinfected.

## SUPPORTING RESPONSIVE BOTTLE FEEDING

Whether a parent or primary caregiver is bottle feeding with expressed breastmilk or infant formula, the following information and guidance will help them to do so in a responsive way. Responsive bottle feeding is important because it:

- supports a closer bond between the baby and the parent or main caregiver
- helps baby feel safe and secure as he is not being fed by many different people
- encourages natural appetite control and prevents overfeeding
- reduces the risk of obesity particularly when using infant formula

## HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

It might not be appropriate to offer infant formula feeds as frequently as if breastfeeding (which can also be offered for comfort) because of the risk of over-feeding.

However, feeding cues such as finger sucking, rooting and moving the head around are a good guide to recognising when a baby may want feeding.

Crying is a very late cue and will make feeding more difficult for both the parent and baby.



## HOW TO GUIDE PARENTS THROUGH RESPONSIVE BOTTLE FEEDING

To help the baby feel safe and secure, it is important that feeding is carried out mostly by the parent or primary caregiver. Being held and fed by lots of people using different techniques can be stressful for the baby. Feeding a baby is a special time and helps build a secure bond with their main caregivers, so keeping the number of people involved to an absolute minimum is essential.

- Encourage parents to hold their baby close and in a semi-upright position so they are able to connect with their baby throughout the feed
- Offer reassurance throughout the feed
- Show parents how to invite their baby to open his mouth by gently rubbing just above his top lip with the teat
- Ask parents to gently insert the teat into the baby's mouth and watch for him to begin sucking
- Show parents how to hold the bottle horizontally with just enough milk to cover the hole in the teat - this will prevent the milk from flowing too fast, which could make it difficult for the baby to control his suck/swallow/breathe reflex
- As the baby feeds, talk to the parents about observable signs that he might need a break, such as splaying hands, turning his head or spitting out milk (the bottle can either then be dropped to cut off the supply or removed completely to allow the baby to have a break)
- It is important to remind the parents not to encourage their baby to complete the feed if he is showing signs of having had enough, as this overrides his natural appetite control and risks overfeeding which can result in reflux, vomiting and discomfort.



## USEFUL RESOURCES

The following tools and resources can be shared with parents to ensure they are confident to bottle feed their baby and know when and where to seek further help if required:

- Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative bottle feeding assessment tool: [unicef.org/babyfriendly-bottle-feeding-assessment](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly/bottle-feeding-assessment)
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative guidance documents on responsive bottle feeding: [unicef.org/babyfriendly-responsive-bottle-feeding](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly-responsive-bottle-feeding)
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative off to the best start leaflet: [unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/off-to-the-best-start/](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/off-to-the-best-start/)
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative bottle feeding resources in other languages: [unicef.org/babyfriendly-resources-foreign-languages](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly-resources-foreign-languages)
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative statement on infant feeding during Covid-19: [unicef.org/babyfriendly-coronavirus-infant-feeding](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly-coronavirus-infant-feeding)
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative guidance documents on responsive bottle feeding: [unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly/COVID-19/](https://www.unicef.org/uk/babyfriendly/COVID-19/)
- First Steps Nutrition Trust: [firststepsnutrition.org/infant-milks-overview](https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/infant-milks-overview)