

HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

WHY AVOID PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING

WHAT IS PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING?

Propped bottle feeding is when you give your baby a bottle by leaning the bottle against a pillow, blanket or other support, rather than holding your baby and the bottle while feeding. These babies are usually too young to be able to hold and control the bottle themselves.

WHY AVOID PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING?

Less interaction

Nutrition is only part of the feeding experience. Propped bottle feeding may not allow for a warm and loving interaction between you and your baby. When you hold your baby when feeding, it helps to develop a closer relationship.

Higher chance of ear infections

Bottle-feeding your baby while they are lying back or lying down can cause ear infections.

Feeding with a propped bottle tipped upward causes liquid to pool in the back of the mouth. The liquid can then backup into your baby's ears through the tubes that run between the throat and ears. Bacteria can then enter through the tube into the ear and cause an ear infection. Frequent ear infections can lead to long term damage.

Higher chance of choking or aspiration

Propped bottle feeding can also cause your baby to choke. When a bottle is propped the liquid will keep flowing until the bottle is empty.

Since propped bottle feeding often happens when parents are busy doing something else, they are not able to watch their baby closely. If your baby is not ready for the extra liquid flowing and the bottle isn't removed, your baby can choke.

If your baby falls asleep before finishing the bottle, they may breathe in the liquid and choke, 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.

Higher chance of tooth decay

When the normal germs inside the mouth combine with food or drink, it produces an acid that leads to tooth decay. This is more common with a propped bottle since the liquid pools in your baby's mouth.

Baby teeth are important as they hold the space for the adult teeth and help your child chew and eat. It is important to keep healthy baby teeth until they naturally fall out.

Did you know that self-feeding bottle systems are illegal to sell in Canada?

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675
TTY 1-866-512-6228
york.ca/feedingkids



York Region

Higher chance of overfeeding

When a bottle is propped, the liquid continues to come out until the bottle is empty even when your baby is full, causing your baby to drink more than their body needs.

Overfeeding can have negative effects such as excess weight gain over time.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING

- Hold your baby and the bottle when you [bottle-feed](#) so they are safe and feel secure and comfortable. Connect with your baby by touching, talking and having eye contact.
- Sit your baby almost fully upright. Hold the bottle parallel to the ground so that the nipple is half to three-quarters full of breastmilk or infant formula. Near the end of the feeding when there is less fluid, tip the bottle up.
- Your baby should not choke, gag or dribble while feeding. They should be relaxed with a calm face and relaxed hands and arms.
- After each feeding or at least twice a day, wipe baby's gums, insides of cheeks and the roof of the mouth using a clean, soft, damp cloth. Once teeth appear, gently brush using a small, soft toothbrush and water.



FOLLOWING YOUR BABY'S HUNGER AND FULLNESS SIGNS IS IMPORTANT

Propped bottle feeding makes it difficult to learn and follow your baby's hunger and fullness signs. Instead, hold your baby and the bottle so you can watch for the signs of hunger and fullness.

Signs that your baby may be hungry include:

- Restlessness
- Rooting (opening their mouth, searching to suck and sucking on contact)
- 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

Your baby will drink more at some feeds and less at other feeds. Follow their hunger and fullness signs to feed them the amount that they need.

If you are unsure whether your baby is drinking enough, talk to your baby's health care provider. Your baby's growth is one way to determine if they are getting the amount that is right for them.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

For information on feeding babies or safely preparing [infant formula](#), visit york.ca/feedingkids

For information on breastfeeding or offering breastmilk, visit york.ca/breastfeeding

To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or online unlockfood.ca

May be reproduced without permission provided source is acknowledged. 2017.