

# Paced Bottle Feeding Method

**This method of feeding should be used only after instruction by a qualified health care professional**



**Breastfeeding Committee  
for Saskatchewan**

[www.thebcs.ca](http://www.thebcs.ca)

Saskatchewan Lactation Consultant  
Association Webpage:  
[www.skslca.com](http://www.skslca.com)

## **Important:**

The way a baby sucks on a bottle nipple is very different from how they suck at the breast.

The fast flow of milk can confuse a baby and create a preference for the bottle.

It is best not to introduce a bottle until breastfeeding is going well, this can take 4 to 6 weeks.

Giving a baby a bottle before breastfeeding is going well can affect your milk supply and the way the baby latches to the breast.

When a supplement is indicated there are alternative feeding methods that can be used instead of a bottle to help keep baby learning how to breastfeed. This includes a spoon, cup, lactation aid or finger feeding. Ask your health care provider for more information.

**The first milk choice is your own expressed breast milk.  
If artificial baby milk (formula) is used discuss possible health risks and how to safely prepare and store milk with your health care professional**

## **What is it?**

- Paced bottle feeding method helps to slow the flow of milk, this allows for a baby to suck, swallow and breathe safely. It also mimics more closely to how a baby would feed at the breast. It allows for the baby to pace themselves according to their feeding cues. It can help to avoid overfeeding.
- With traditional bottle feeding a baby is positioned in a reclined position with the bottle held upright, it may look like the baby is very hungry as they tend to eagerly gulp. The milk flows fast, the baby can be swallowing quickly in order to try and avoid choking. This can be unsafe for baby.

## **Getting ready:**

- Wash your hands
- Gather supplies:
  - expressed breast milk or formula at room temperature
  - sterilized bottle with an artificial slow flow nipple

## **How to do Paced Bottle Feeding:**

- Hold your baby in an upright position, support their head and neck with your hand.
- Feed your baby skin-to-skin if possible.
- Touch the baby's upper lip with the nipple to encourage the baby to open their mouth wide like they would at the breast.
- Allow the baby to gently pull the nipple into their mouth. Do not force the nipple into baby's mouth.
- Start with the bottle in a horizontal position (parallel to the floor). This will help to control the flow of the milk.
- Allow baby to start sucking on a small amount of milk. This will mimic breastfeeding as it can take a minute or so for the letdown of milk to occur at the breast.
- Tip the bottle just enough to keep the tip of the nipple filled with milk throughout the feeding. As the bottle empties you will have to tip the bottle up more.
- Watch your baby's cues. Allow baby to suck and swallow at their own pace. If the baby takes a pause from sucking you can tip the bottle back to a horizontal position. Wait for signs baby is ready to start sucking again. Tip the bottle back up once sucking restarts.
- Your baby will naturally swallow some air during a feeding. Take short breaks and burp baby as needed.
- Switch baby from one side to the other halfway through the feeding. Like breastfeeding this will allow your baby to feed on the left and right side. It provides stimulation to both eyes and both sides of the body. It may help to avoid the baby having a preference to feed on only one side.



## Breastfeeding Committee for Saskatchewan

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### For further information contact:

Local Public Health Nurse

International Board Certified  
Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)

Local breastfeeding support  
Group

Saskatchewan HealthLine 811

#### References:

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Flora, Becky (2017). Offering your breastfed baby a bottle.

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Regional Municipality of Peel (2018). Paced bottle feeding.

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Smith, Anne (2015). Introducing bottles and pacifiers to breastfed baby.

<https://www.breastfeedingbasics.com/articles/introducing-bottles-and-pacifiers-to-a-breastfed-baby>

St. Charles Health System Oregon (2018).

[http://www.stcharleshealthcare.org/~media/Files/OBGYN/PacedBottleFeeding\\_Handout.pdf](http://www.stcharleshealthcare.org/~media/Files/OBGYN/PacedBottleFeeding_Handout.pdf)

## Remove the bottle if your baby shows any signs of distress:

- swallowing quickly without taking a breath after each swallow
- baby becomes fussy and pushes the bottle out of their mouth
- milk is spilling out of the baby's mouth
- stiffening of arms or legs
- flaring nostrils
- grimacing

These are signs that your baby needs a break from the feeding. Gently remove the bottle and allow the baby to take a pause. Reoffer the bottle once the baby is in a calm state and if they are showing hunger cues. If your baby continues to show signs of distress with bottle feeding, see a health professional.

## How to know your baby is full:

- falling asleep
- letting go of the nipple
- turning their head to the side
- no longer sucking

Feed your baby on demand (8 or more times per day) with their feeding cues—stirring, hand to mouth, turning head, rooting and stretching. Crying is a late cue.

Feeding time should be enjoyable experience make eye contact with your baby throughout the paced bottle feeding.

Allow the baby to decide when the feeding is done. If bottle feeding takes an excessive amount of time to complete, see a health professional.

If you are breastfeeding and bottle feeding, offer the breast first with every feeding. This will continue to help your baby learn how to breastfeed and keep your breasts stimulated to produce a good milk supply.

Try to only use the bottle, or other feeding method such as cup or spoon, when you and baby are physically separated. A bottle does not need to be offered daily unless it is a personal choice or the baby needs supplements for medical reasons.

If baby is not nursing well or often at the breast, hand expression and pumping may be recommended to help build and maintain you milk supply to feed baby. Speak with your health professional for continued breastfeeding support.

Once you are done bottle feeding, discard any milk that your baby does not finish.

Video from the Milk Mob (2017) on Paced Bottle Feeding:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGPm5SpLxXY>