

Hints For Offering A Breastfed Baby A Bottle

Occasionally a breastfed baby balks at accepting an artificial nipple for his feeding. The following suggestions may help you when offering a bottle to a resisting baby.

1. It is often helpful to have someone other than the mother offer the bottle, especially if that someone is confident and patient with a fussy baby. Mother should be out of the room entirely.
2. Anticipate. Try to give the baby a bottle before he's overly hungry. The more mellow he feels, the more likely he is to accept something new. Sometimes it helps to catch baby before he is fully awake, and instinct takes over.
3. Cuddle with the baby as the bottle is given, just as he is cuddled while nursing. If the baby resists this, try holding him with his back against mom's chest and let him look out into the room-the distraction may be helpful.
4. If baby resists being cuddled, try feeding him in an infant seat.
5. Baby may not like the taste of latex rubber, so try clear silicone nipples. Pu™ and Evenflo™ have silicone orthodontic nipples.
6. If the flow of milk from the nipple is too fast, try a slow flow nipple or a preemie nipple. The preemie nipple is also softer than latex or silicone.
7. Some babies do best if breastmilk is in the bottle, and others do better if something else is offered-water, formula, etc.
8. Some babies prefer the fluid to be warm like breastmilk.
9. It may be helpful to warm the nipple under warm water, although a teething child may prefer the nipple cold (chill in the refrigerator).
10. With a younger infant, try starting with an eyedropper, spoon, etc. first then go to a nipple.
11. Let the baby suck a clean finger first, then slip the nipple into the baby's mouth along side the finger, then slip the finger out. (Be sure the fingernail is short to prevent injury).
12. If old enough, let baby play with an empty bottle for a day or two to become familiar with it.
13. Try short, frequent trials until baby takes the nipple without difficulty. It's better to try several short trials than have a major bout of screaming.
14. If the baby is at least 6 months old, try a trainer cup with SMALL holes. Some babies will go straight to a cup and bypass the bottle entirely.
15. Dip the nipple in warm breast milk.
16. Gently stimulate baby's mouth with the artificial nipple as is done with mother's nipple at the breast. Let the baby "mouth" the bottle nipple and become familiar with it.
17. Be patient. Baby will accept it gradually, even if he doesn't at first.

Thanks to Susan Orr, RPT, CLC, Janet Jendron (excepted from Rental Roundup), and Carol Follingstad, RN, MPH, CLC, for their suggestions. This may be copied as a handout if you wish to use it in your practice.