

NUTRITION

On Your
Own

Self-Paced Lesson

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Growing Up... and off the bottle

For Strong Teeth and a Healthy Child

Switching your baby from a bottle to a cup is a big part of growing up. Drinking from a cup will protect your baby's teeth from early childhood caries, another word for cavities. Early childhood caries used to be known as "baby bottle tooth decay." Little ones don't drink as much when they drink from the cup, so this will help your baby have a healthy weight and encourage him to eat more table foods to help him grow.

Starting early will make it easier. Try to move your baby to a cup by around age one.

Most babies are ready to start drinking from a cup around 6 to 8 months of age. Your baby might be ready for a cup if he:

- **Can sit up without help.**
- **Takes infant food from a spoon easily.**
- **Uses hands to grab items.**

Some babies stop taking the bottle very easily and others take more time. Starting off right, making small changes, and sticking with it will help your baby drink from a cup more easily.



IN THIS LESSON, WE'LL HELP YOU:

- **Start your child off right with healthy habits that will later make switching to the cup easier.**
- **Make gradual changes to get your child more comfortable drinking from cups.**
- **Stick with it and stay positive.**



"I'm very proud that my child has made the switch from bottles to cups. Being bottle-free means I don't have to worry about rotten teeth or her drinking too much milk."

– Claudia, WIC mom

TIPS TO SWITCH FROM BOTTLES TO CUPS

Start off right (Birth to 6 months)

Check two or three things you already do or plan to do with your baby.

- Use the bottle for formula, breastmilk, or water only. Do not put milk, juice, baby food, or cereal in the bottle.
- Use the bottle for feeding only. Do not let your baby play with the bottle, use it as a pacifier, or fall asleep with it.
- Find ways to comfort your baby without giving a bottle. Pacifiers, blankets, soft toys, and cuddling with your baby will help.
- Start thinking early about how you will wean your baby from the bottle. Having a plan and sticking to it will help make the weaning process easier.

Make gradual changes (6 to 12 months)

Check two or three things you already do or plan to do with your baby.

- Start with a cup that is easy to use. One that has handles is easier for your baby to hold. A cup with a lid helps when your baby is learning, but do not let him walk around with it during the day.
- Start by offering a cup in place of one bottle. As your baby adjust to this, add another feeding from a cup. Continue this until all bottle feedings are replaced with cups.
- If your baby refuses breastmilk or formula in a cup and has not mastered eating foods, he still needs breastmilk and formula for nutritional needs. Feed your baby the breastmilk or formula as usual and continue offering him the cup at other times.
- Make the cup fun! Choose a cup with bright colors or a character on it. Get your baby excited by clapping your hands or making a funny animal noise every time he takes a sip. Maybe your baby will keep sipping just to hear his silly mom!

Stick with it (12+ months)

Check two or three things you already do or plan to do with your baby.

- Weaning can be hard for toddlers. Provide extra cuddling, rocking, or singing to calm your baby.
- Don't give the bottle every time your toddler cries. Recycle or donate the bottles so you are not tempted to give them. If you plan on reusing them later, put them in the attic or storage. Out of sight, out of mind.
- If your toddler has a hard time drinking whole milk from a cup at one year old, don't give up. Continue to offer the cup, but offer other calcium-rich foods such as cheese, yogurt, or calcium-fortified juice at snack times to help him grow strong bones. – Stick with it!
- Stay positive! If your baby notices you are upset when he does not take the cup, this makes him upset too. Reward him with hugs, kisses, and cheers when he takes sips from his new cup. Every sip counts!

Congratulations, you're finished! By now, you should have at least 6 new things to try at home.

If you are having a hard time getting your baby to drink from cups, you are not alone. If your child continues to refuse the cup after his first birthday, please talk to your WIC nutritionist or doctor for more suggestions.