

Say Goodbye to the Baby Bottle



If your toddler or preschooler is drinking from a bottle, it is time to say 'goodbye' to bottle feeding and 'hello' to drinking from an open cup.

Reasons to Stop Using a Bottle

Drinking milk and other beverages from a bottle for too long increases the risk for:

Lower appetite at meal or snack time

Some children who fill up on milk, juice or other beverages during the day may not be hungry for foods served at meal and snack time. This can lead to picky eating behaviours and feeding challenges.

Iron Deficiency

Using a bottle past 12 months of age is associated with a higher risk for iron deficiency. Bottle drinking may result in drinking too much milk, which can lower iron absorption and/or lowers how much iron-rich foods a child eats. Iron deficiency can impact your child's growth and development.

If you think your child may be low in iron, talk to your child's health care professional.

Early childhood tooth decay (cavities)

Many beverages, such as milk, formula or juice, contain naturally occurring sugars. Drinking from bottles (and even sippy cups) throughout the day can expose your child's teeth to these sugars, increasing their risk of tooth decay. Bedtime bottles can also cause liquid to pool in the mouth causing tooth decay.

Cavities (tooth decay) can be painful so have regular visits to the dentist and learn how to **care for your child's teeth** to help prevent tooth decay.

Drinking From a Cup

Babies are ready to begin learning how to drink from

an open cup at six months of age. If offered regularly, they will be able to drink all of their beverages from an open cup by 12 months of age.

By 18 months, it is recommended that bottles and sippy cups are no longer used.

Different Types of Cups

Open cup

Open cups are simply regular drinking cups that older children and adults use. You do not need to buy a special open cup for your child. You may already have a cup that would work well for your child. A small, lightweight cup, that is easy for your child to hold, will work best.

Sippy, training and other spill-free cups

Sippy, training and other spill-free cups are not the same as an open cup. Since most have a valve to prevent spills, your child must get the liquid by sucking, similar to a bottle. This does not help your child develop the same drinking skills as an open cup. This also applies to training cups with straws. While these types of cups may be convenient options when away from home, they do not replace the recommendation to introduce and transition to an open cup.

Say 'Goodbye' to the Baby Bottle

Moving from bottle to cup can be a time of mixed emotions since your child is growing up and no longer needs a bottle. Remember, your child is learning a new skill and reaching a new milestone.

There are many ways to transition your child from the baby bottle to an open cup. There is not one way that works best. Do what you feel works best for you and your child.

Tips to help the transition

- Prepare your child for the transition and talk about what will happen at the usual bottle-times
- Set limits on when your child can have a bottle
- Reduce the number of bottles given in a day, one at a time. To start, replace the bottle time that is your child's least favourite with a cup instead. The bottle time that is their favourite can be the last one to go. Often this is at bedtime
- Only offer water in the bottle. If your child requests milk, offer it in an open cup or take the lid off the bottle so there is no nipple
- Try a different activity when you would normally offer a bottle. For example, go to the park or read a book to your child
- If you are removing bedtime or night bottles, it may be difficult at first for your child to relax and fall asleep. They may need extra nighttime comfort, such as hugs and snuggles, as they adjust to this new routine

Be patient while they work through this transition. If you feel like you must give them a bottle, only place water in it.

For safety reasons, do not let your child have a bottle while walking, riding in the stroller, playing or while falling asleep.

Make sure the bedtime routine includes brushing your child's teeth using a small, soft toothbrush. If they are less than three years of age, only use water or a small amount of non-fluoridated toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice), unless advised otherwise by your child's oral health professional.

Say 'Hello' to the Open Cup

When your baby is six months old, they can start learning how to drink from an open cup

- If a bottle is offered between meals, replace it with a nutritious snack and 125 mL (4 oz) of milk in an open cup. Offer a meal or snack every 2½ - 3 hours and ensure your child is safely seated in their highchair or booster seat
- Use a cup that has a theme or character your child enjoys
- Give choices involving a cup (e.g., "would you like your milk in the blue or red cup?")
- If drinking from an open cup is new to your child, be patient as they learn and provide help
- Be a role model and drink from an open cup when your child does

Consistency Matters

Once you start the transition process, be consistent and know that your child may express frustration around not having their bottle. Be patient and offer comfort when this occurs. Your child will adjust as you support them through this challenge.

Try to get other care professionals and family members involved. It can be helpful if they follow the same approach with transitioning from the baby bottle.

Getting Enough Milk Without a Bottle

Offer children aged 12 months and older 500 mL (16 oz) of homogenized 3.25% M.F. milk each day. At two years, children can switch to low-fat or skim milk. Remember that if you are breastfeeding*, your child likely does not need any additional cow's milk.

Since it is easier to drink from a bottle, your child will likely drink less milk as they move to drinking from an open cup. For most children, this is not a concern as many are already drinking more milk than 500 mL (16 oz) per day.

To help your child get enough milk during the transition, offer 125 mL (4 oz) servings of milk in an open cup at scheduled meal and/or snack times.

For more information

Contact **Health811**, 24 hours, 7 days/week to speak to a registered nurse or registered dietitian, at no cost. Call **811** or toll free **1-866-797-0000** or live chat at ontario.ca/health811



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