

Cup feeding



Lactation- parent information

Cup feeding is a safe and effective way to feed your baby when they are unable to breastfeed effectively or need extra milk. To help protect breastfeeding, a cup is preferred over a bottle with a teat. Babies of all ages can be cup-fed, but they need a rooting reflex to feed this way.

Why choose cup feeding?

- **Supports natural feeding movements**- natural tongue and jaw movements, like breastfeeding.
- **Your baby has more control over how much and quickly they drink.**
- **Helps with breathing and swallowing coordination**- supports a stable heart rate, respiratory rate, and oxygen levels.
- **Engages your baby's senses**- they can smell the milk, and it helps start digestion in the mouth.
- **Useful in emergencies**- cups are easy to clean, or disposable cups can be used.
- Takes a similar amount of time as bottle feeding.

Cup feeding works well when your baby needs more than 5 ml of milk. If you give a small amount, like colostrum, finger feeding is better. There is no rule about how much milk you can give with a cup. Your baby will drink as much as they want and stop when they are full.

What should you feed your baby?

Expressed breastmilk is the best choice. A breastmilk substitute (such as formula) may be used if needed for medical reasons or at your request. A written consent for a breastmilk substitute is required in the hospital setting.



How to cup feed

1. Before starting, wash and dry your hands.
2. Place the milk into a clean, dry cup (fill no more than halfway).
3. Only cup feed when your baby is **awake and alert**.
4. Wrap your young baby securely to prevent their hands from knocking the cup. Older babies don't need wrapping.
5. Place a bib under your baby's chin to catch any dribbles.
6. Hold your baby mostly **upright** in your lap.
7. Rest the cup on their bottom lip.
8. Tip the cup slightly so the milk reaches the rim- **do not pour the milk in their mouth**.
9. Let your baby lap the milk with their tongue at their own pace.
A young baby will lap the milk with its tongue, while an older baby might suck or sip it.
10. Keep the cup in place as the baby pauses, ensuring the milk is always just on the rim of the cup.
11. When they've had enough, they will close their mouth or pull away. An older baby may push the cup away.

⚠ Important: Never lay your baby back or pour milk into their mouth — this can cause them to splutter, and they may breathe in some milk.

Remember to keep offering plenty of opportunities to go on the breast. Continue skin-to-skin contact with your baby (under 6 weeks of age).

📺 Watch a demonstration here (QR Code): [Global Health Media – Cup Feeding](#)
Australian Breastfeeding Association Fact Sheet: Cup Feeding:
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/cup-feeding>

