



How to successfully combine breast and bottle feeding

Tips from Australia's most sought-after midwife

Whether you plan on combined feeding from the start, are going back to work or just want to add some flexibility to your routine, there are many benefits of having a baby that can bottle feed as well as breastfeed. 'Although it might sound simple enough, bottle rejection is a common issue that many mums and bubs struggle with, particularly if bub is exclusively breastfed for the first six months' says NUK spokesperson Midwife Cath. Here are our top tips on how to transition from breast to bottle.

Start early

It's important to introduce a bottle early to increase the chances of acceptance. 'Start with one bottle a day within the first 5-6 weeks. The first week is optimal.' says Midwife Cath. This will enable the baby to continue to take the bottle long term whilst breastfeeding at the same time. Always start a feed by breastfeeding and then finish with the bottle, even if baby only takes a small amount.

Involve the family

Most breastfeeding mothers will agree that breastfeeding is a sacred time to establish closeness with baby. Bottle feeding allows other family members to help feed baby and enjoy those special bonding moments too. 'Dad can take over the night feed so mum can get more sleep. Now that's a win-win situation!' says Midwife Cath.

Your breast-friend

While there are many good formula options available, bottles can be used to feed baby expressed breast milk. A breast pump will allow mum to express breast milk that can be stored in the fridge or freezer for use later on. An electric breast pump will allow for an optimal milk-flow and is the most efficient way to express. This is a great option for mothers who have long term breastfeeding goals and want to feed baby expressed breast milk when returning to work. A manual breast pump on the other hand is better express milk for comfort over volume.

What to look for in a bottle

Some babies take to a bottle easily while others need a little more convincing. Understanding why baby isn't taking a bottle can be difficult however can often be demystified when you know what to look for.

It's all about the nipple.

Choose a teat that best resembles your nipple so baby does not experience nipple confusion and reject the bottle. The NUK Nature Sense Bottle is shaped liked a mothers' nipple while breastfeeding and features not one, but several tiny feeding holes, to replicate the numerous milk ducts in the breast. By choosing a teat shape that mimics nature, you reduce the risk of nipple-confusion and increase the chance of acceptance.

Choose the right teat size.

Make sure you have the basics right by choosing the correct teat size and Flow Rate. The Flow Rate refers to the size of the feed hole OR the quantity of holes on the teat. A small hole (or fewer holes) will let the liquid down slowly. 'This is optimal for breast milk and will allow you to continue breastfeeding long term' says Midwife Cath. A medium or large hole will let the liquid down faster still.

Remember, your baby can grow and thrive irrespective of whether you opt for breastfeeding or bottle feeding. What's more important for your baby's nutrition in the first few weeks is that you both feel relaxed and comfortable. So, trust your own instincts and choose the right fit for you.

Love Midwife Cath xx

Midwife Cath is a fully-qualified nurse, midwife, maternal and child health nurse. Over her 40-year career, Midwife Cath has delivered over 10,000 babies. Her areas of expertise include women's health, pre-pregnancy, antenatal care and education, pregnancy, labour and birth, postnatal care, breastfeeding and parenting. Midwife Cath is a proud NUK ambassador.