

Paced Bottle Feeding – As Much like Breastfeeding As Possible

Breastfed babies are used to being able to control the flow of milk as they feed and may find bottle-feeding stressful. It may appear that the baby is very hungry and gulping the milk down when in fact he might be doing all he can to swallow fast enough to not choke. One way to avoid this is to pace the feeds.

Advantages of giving babies control of the pace of feeds:

- It allows the baby to drink the amount he wants rather than the caregiver overfeeding him by in effect pouring the milk in.
- If you do not overfeed a baby, you encourage him to want to practice breastfeed more often. This will help to maintain the mother's milk supply and minimize the amount of pumping that mom has to do.
- By avoiding overfeeding, the mother does not need to spend as much time expressing just to keep up with the amount of milk the baby is guzzling.

How to pace feeds

- Hold the baby in an upright position, supporting the baby's head and neck with your hand rather than with the crook of your arm.
- Use a wide-based, slow flow teat.
- Gently touch the wide part of the teat to the baby's chin. This will encourage the baby to open his mouth wide, allowing you to pop the entire teat into his mouth, mimicking breastfeeding. **Do not** push the teat into the baby's mouth.
- Keep the bottle horizontal, only vertical enough for milk to be in the nipple.
- You may want to let the baby suck a few sucks with just air so that baby doesn't get the idea that flow is immediate! Of course this may cause the baby to need to be burped more, but this is a minor drawback compared to a baby who refuses the breast because the flow at the breast is not immediate. Remember, we are trying to feed the baby while not teaching habits that are detrimental to breastfeeding.
- Frequent pauses mimic a breastfeed and discourage the baby from guzzling the feed.
- Watch for signs of stress from baby such as furrowing of brow or widening of eyes.
- When giving baby a pause, twist the nipple before removing it so that baby has a warning that nipple is coming out. This will prevent defensive behaviors such as clamping and sucking harder when baby never knows when nipple will be removed.
- Rest nipple on cheek or chin when giving pauses so that baby knows the nipple is still available.
- Offer nipple again with wide base touching baby's chin. When baby opens mouth wide, lay the wide base on the tongue and pop the rest of the nipple in the mouth.
- Try to pace the feeding so that it takes about 15-20 minutes to finish the bottle.
- Allow the baby to decide when to finish the feed rather than encouraging the baby to finish the bottle. You will probably find that at one of the "pauses", baby is not interested in taking the nipple anymore.

References:

<http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/CaregiverGuide06.pdf>

<http://www.kellymom.com/bf/pumping/bottle-feeding.html>

Presentation by Catherine Watson Genna at Journal Club