



Introducing cups to your baby

Babies can cup feed right from birth and this method is often used to feed babies in the early days if they are having difficulty latching to the breast. This situation is covered in my information sheet on alternative feeding methods [here](#).

As babies get older it is important, if they are bottle fed, that they transition to cups. Feeding a baby by bottle interferes with the drainage of the Eustachian tube (the tube that connects the middle ear to the nasal-sinus cavity) and this predisposes babies to ear infections. Bottle feeding will also impact the shape of the palate (roof of the mouth).

Many of the babies I see have tongue-ties and this impacts the shape of the palate as the resting tongue posture in a tongue-tied baby is low, so the tongue doesn't rest up in the palate to spread and shape it during development in the womb. prolonged bottle use in these babies will only exacerbate the problem. But in any baby, because the bottle teat is narrow, it can negatively impact the palate making it higher and more narrow than it should be which can have implications for the airway (see my blog post [here](#)) and lead to dental overcrowding due to the resulting narrowing of the dental arch.

Prolonged use of a bottle will also impact development of the fascial and jaw muscles which can lead to issues with speech.

When is a good time to transition to cups?

All babies should be offered some water in a cup from about 6 months when they start solids. It will take them some time and practice to master a cup and as a parent your job is to be patient and encouraging. They will get it and once they do you can give all their milk feeds in a cup and dispose of the bottles.

With fully breastfed babies there obviously isn't the need to withdraw the bottles and breastfeeding can continue for however long you and your baby want it to. But you may want the flexibility of being able to give baby milk from something other than the breast so moving straight to a cup makes sense, if your baby is a bit older. For breastfed babies, or indeed bottle-fed babies that are struggling to take the bottle, the introduction of a cup can start as early as 3-4 months. If you are introducing a cup before 6 months then use breastmilk or formula, rather than water, as we do not want water to displace the milk feeds and too much water given to young babies can be dangerous (see [here](#) for more information)

All babies should be off bottles and onto cups by age one year.



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What cups should you use?

Open type cups are best as these are like the cups, we all use and what baby will be using long term. They are better for oral hygiene and dental health.

There are examples below:

available from Amazon and this website <https://www.doidycups.com/> where you can read more about these cups and their benefits.



Baby cups available here <https://babycup.com/>



Flexi cup available here <https://www.fledglings.org.uk/products/flexi-cup-blue?>



Reflo Cup

This is an American product which you can buy from Amazon UK. It is essentially a regular plastic tumbler with an insert which controls the flow of fluid. There is a video here describing it https://youtu.be/weDLgEUNwSg?si=Ct8nTVcnSYR_AwAT



Seposeve Dinky Cup

Small soft silicone weight cup. Available online from Amazon and other sellers.



Free flow (non-valved) sippy cups can also be used. Again, these are better than the valved ‘anyway up’ type cups in terms of dental health because parents are less likely to leave the cup sitting around with milk or juice in it for the baby or toddler to graze on. They are also better for fascial muscle and jaw development because with valved cups the baby will suck on it in a similar way to a bottle so moving them from a bottle to a valved cup isn’t really helping them make any progress.

These non-valved cups are increasingly difficult to get hold of but many of the valved sippy cups come with a removeable valve. Examples below:

Tommee Tippee First Cup available in supermarkets and online.



Mam Starter Cup (available without a valve and with a valve that can be removed). These can be bought in larger supermarkets and large Boots stores and online. More information [here](#).



A video on cup feeding with a Doidy cup can be found [here](#).