



Helping Hands

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WEANING YOUR BABY: CUP FEEDING

Weaning is the time when your baby learns to drink from a cup instead of from a breast or bottle. Infants usually stay on formula until their first birthday. Give **formula** in the cup instead of cow's milk if you wean your child before one year of age. Ask your doctor, nurse, or dietician if you have any questions or problems.

WHEN TO START

The age of weaning is different for each baby. Most are ready to start learning to use a cup by 6 to 12 months of age. The baby should be able to sit up well without support before you begin weaning. Encourage your child to give up the bottle when your baby shows any of these signs:

- Shortens his or her breastfeeding time.
- Is easily distracted when held for a feeding.
- Wants to hold the bottle alone.

HOW TO BEGIN

At about 9 months of age, you may start to place an empty cup within the child's reach so that your baby can get used to the cup. When you drink from your own cup, the baby may try to imitate you by bringing the cup to his or her mouth. When your baby can hold the cup, begin weaning by using one of these methods:

WEANING GRADUALLY

- ❖ Replace one breastfeeding or bottle feeding a day with a cup feeding. This is a new experience for your baby, so take your time and help with the cup. The first feeding you replace is your choice. A good place to start is the feeding that your child resists least.
- ❖ After the child adjust to taking this feeding from a cup, replace a second breast or bottle feeding with a cup feeding. This may take a few days or weeks, depending on the child.
- ❖ Continue to replace bottle feedings until your baby is no longer feeding from the bottle. Breastfeeding can continue beyond one year of age, but the child should also be drinking other liquids from a cup.
- ❖ It's best not to start giving a baby a bottle in bed, but if the child does take a bottle to bed, stop this feeding first. The use of a nighttime bottle can cause tooth decay because the formula sticks to the teeth and germs grow, causing cavities. Ear infections may also occur. When the baby is lying down, formula can flow from the throat to the middle ear by way of the eustachian tubes. Bacteria can grow in this formula and cause an ear infection. Your baby may not want to give up a nighttime bottle, but a bottle of water, a favorite toy, or a bedtime story can replace this bottle.