

# Cup feeding your breastfed baby

There are times when it isn't possible to breastfeed your baby and you need to find another method of feeding her.

While bottles are often the obvious choice, there is growing interest in using a cup when you intend to breastfeed your baby but are currently unable to. Using a cup will reduce the possibility of nipple confusion - which is common in newborn babies who are fed by both a bottle and the breast.

## When should I consider cup feeding?

Cup feeding is most commonly used as the primary source of milk in premature babies who are yet to develop their sucking reflex or have a sucking reflex that is still too weak to allow them to breastfeed successfully

Young babies who drink from a cup ordinarily use a 'lapping' action to drink - much like a cat laps its milk. While not actually sucking, drinking in this way still teaches babies valuable lessons - how to adjust their intake of milk, and how to move their tongue forward when drinking - that will help get breastfeeding established later.

There are times when you may need to use cup feeding as an alternative to breastfeeding for older babies - these are most commonly as a result of maternal health issues such as cracked nipples, or ill health resulting in physical separation from your baby. If you are planning to resume breastfeeding, it's important you're your older baby is kept on a cup for only a short time as she may resist transferring back to the breast.

## Learning to cup feed

Cup feeding is a skill that needs to be taught to both mother and baby and it is essential that you get help from a healthcare professional who will be able to guide you and check that you are doing it correctly.

To successfully cup feed check that:

- Your baby is in an upright position. If you hold your baby in a reclining position, there is a chance that she will choke as a result of milk entering her lungs.
- Make sure your baby is alert and properly awake
- You keep her hands out of the way of the cup to avoid spills
- You tilt the cup of milk so that its rim touching your baby's lower lip.
- You aren't pouring the milk into her mouth - she should be sipping or lapping the milk. This will allow her to have some control over how much and how fast she drinks.
- You don't take the cup away if your baby takes a break - wait until she pulls away from the cup before finishing the feed.
- Check that your baby puts her tongue forward to drink from the cup - this will ensure that she can easily transition back to the breast when your circumstances allow it.

## IMPORTANT!

Learning to drink from a cup is an important skill for your baby to learn, however, this skill usually develops as you introduce solid food to your baby's diet. The above cup feeding tips are specifically designed for very young babies who cannot currently breastfeed but who will return to the breast in the near future.