

# NO NEED FOR FORMULA MILK or BOTTLES BEYOND THE AGE OF 1

Many toddlers become attached to their bottles. Besides providing nourishment, bottles also mean comfort and security.

It's important for parents to start weaning (discouraging) babies from bottles around the end of the first year and start getting them comfortable drinking from cups.

The longer parents wait to start the transition, the more attached kids become to their bottles; the more difficult it can be to break the bottle habit. Longer bottle use may lead to cavities or cause your child to drink more than needed. Switching from bottle to cup can be challenging, but these tips can make the change easier for parents & kids.

## Children over one do not need formula milk, experts say

Experts say the health benefits touted by formula milk are too often too much of a "marketing ploy" as the same nutrients can be found in everyday food. Referring to nutrients like docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), taurine and choline which have been promoted by milk manufacturers as giving health benefits like brain and eye development, healthy immune system and helping fat digestion, paediatric dietitian Meave Graham from Child Nutrition Singapore said: "These nutrients are found in breast milk and in normal balanced diets. Children do not need special supplements of these nutrients."

In fact, giving formula milk to picky eaters can worsen the situation.

"The higher sugar level (in formula milk) gives a sweet taste and can be very filling, reducing interest in trying other foods. Formula milk offers no nutritional benefit over a balanced diet," she said, stressing that formula milk is not recommended for children above 12 months.

An infant who weans well and is having excessive formula milk intake can become obese. This carries a negative impact on long-term health with the child having a higher risk of developing metabolic conditions such as adult obesity, diabetes and heart disease, she said.

## Timing the Transition

Most doctors recommend introducing a cup around the time a baby is 6 months old. In the beginning, much of what you serve in a cup will end up on the floor or on your baby. But by 12 months of age, most babies have the coordination and hand skills needed to hold a cup and drink from it.

Age 1 is also when doctors recommend switching from formula to cow's milk. It can be a natural transition to offer milk in a cup rather than a bottle. If you're still



breastfeeding, you can continue feeding your baby breast milk, but you may want to do so by offering it in a cup.

## Tips to Try

Instead of cutting out bottles all at once, try eliminating them gradually from the feeding schedule, starting at mealtimes.

For example, if your baby usually drinks three bottles each day, start by eliminating the morning bottle. Instead of giving a bottle right away, bring your baby to the table and after the feeding has started, offer milk from a cup. You might need to offer some encouragement and explanation, saying something like "you're a big boy now and can use a cup like mommy."

As you try to eliminate the morning bottle, keep offering the afternoon and evening bottles for about a week. That way, if your child asks for the bottle you can provide assurance that one is coming later.

The next week, eliminate another bottle feeding and provide milk in a cup instead. Try to do this when your baby is sitting at the table in a high chair.

Generally, the last bottle to stop should be the nighttime bottle. That bottle tends to be a part of the bedtime routine and is the one that most provides comfort to babies.

Instead of the bottle, try offering a cup of milk with your child's dinner and continue with the rest of your nighttime tasks, like a bath, bedtime story, or teeth brushing.

## More Strategies to keep in mind:

- Spill-proof cups that have spouts designed just for babies (often referred to as "sippy cups") can help ease the transition from the bottle. Dentists recommend sippy cups with a hard spout or a straw.
- When your child does use the cup, offer plenty of praise and positive reinforcement.
- If you keep getting asked for a bottle, find out what your child really needs or wants and offer that instead. If your child is thirsty or hungry, provide nourishment in a cup or on a plate. If it's comfort, offer hugs, and if your child is bored, sit down and play!
- As you're weaning your baby from the bottle, try diluting the milk in the bottle with water. For the first few days, fill half of it with water and half of it with milk. Then gradually add more water until the entire bottle is water. By that time, it's likely that your child will lose interest and be asking for the yummy milk that comes in a cup!
- Get rid of the bottles or put them out of sight.