Weaning Tips

Bedtime

Offer your child a cup and a snack before bedtime, and then wipe your child's teeth or gums. If you have to put your child to bed with a bottle, put plain water in it. Try other ways to comfort your child instead of a bottle:

- give your child a favorite blanket or toy to sleep with
- offer a clean pacifier
- read a story
- sing or play music
- rub your child's back
- hold or rock your child

Breastfeeding

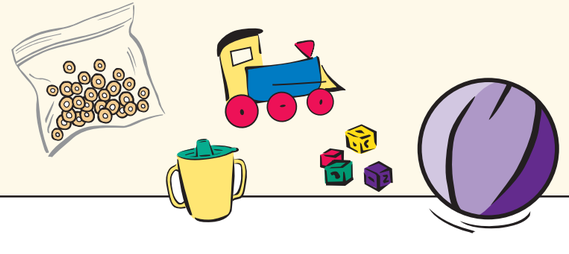
If you're still breastfeeding your child, that's great!

Just remember, breastmilk has sugar too. Be sure to clean your child's teeth and gums at least twice a day.

When you go out

Take a snack and a cup for your child instead of a bottle.

Take a few toys or books along to keep your child happy.



Help your child change from the bottle to the cup!

Keep your child's teeth healthy

- Ask your doctor about giving your child fluoride drops. Fluoride will help protect the teeth.
- Brush your child's teeth with a small, soft, wet toothbrush (no toothpaste), at least twice a day. Start using a tiny bit of toothpaste at age 2.
- Take your child to a dentist between ages 2 and 3 years — sooner if you think there might be a problem.

It's up to you!

You can help your child grow well, be healthy, and have strong teeth.

Help your child change from the bottle to the cup!

Washington State Department of Health
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Time for a Cup

6 to 8 months old

This is my goal: _____

_____

_____

Why change to a cup now?

Weaning Your Child

Your baby is growing up! Weaning begins when your child starts eating solid foods and learns to drink from a cup.

Why a cup?

Now your child needs to eat a lot of different foods to grow. If your child fills up on drinks from a bottle, your child will not eat enough of the other good foods. Your child could have other problems from using a bottle too long: tooth decay, anemia, too much weight gain, or ear infections.

Tooth decay

Children can get tooth decay when they drink from a bottle.

Why?

Milk, baby formula, juice, and sweet drinks all have sugar. This sugar can rot your child's teeth if he/she goes to sleep with a bottle or drinks from a bottle all day long. This tooth decay can be very painful.

Baby teeth are important! They help your child eat well and talk, and they help the second teeth come in straight.

Anemia

Children who use a bottle can get anemia or low-iron blood.

Why?

Children fill up on drinks from a bottle. Milk, juice, and other drinks are low in iron.

Children need foods like meat, chicken, beans, and WIC cereals to get the iron they need to grow. Anemia can make your child feel tired and weak, eat poorly, not grow well, get sick easily, and have trouble learning.

Overweight

Children who use a bottle after their first birthday sometimes gain too much weight.

Why?

When they drink from a bottle, children may drink more than they need.

After your child's first birthday, 4 to 6 small servings of milk or milk products a day is enough. No more than 24 ounces (710 milliliters) of milk per day. Limit juice to about 4 ounces (120 milliliters) per day. Using a cup will make it easier to drink less.

Ear infections

Children who drink from a bottle while lying down can get ear infections.

Why?

The liquid from the bottle can go into your child's ear. This is how some ear infections begin.

Weaning your child from the bottle...

You can help your child change to the cup by trying these steps:

- Start teaching your child to use a cup at around 6 months. Try a small plastic cup. A cup with a lid is not as messy. Some children like cups with handles.

- Help your child learn to take sips of water, juice or formula from the cup. Give your child lots of practice. Learning takes time! Try not to worry about spills.

- At around 9 or 10 months, start cutting down on the number of bottles your child gets each day. Use the cup instead.
- If morning and bedtime bottles are hard to give up, start weaning with the daytime bottles. If you use a bedtime bottle, put plain water in it.
- Give your child snacks between meals instead of a bottle. Give a little milk or juice in a cup with snacks.

Washington State Department of Health

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Sincerely,
Health Education Resource Exchange Web Team

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