

Neonatal speech and language therapy

Choosing a bottle for your baby

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This information sheet is for parents who are planning to use bottles to feed their baby.

Your choice of bottle and teat can support you and your baby to have a more positive and enjoyable early feeding experience during your neonatal stay and beyond. If you are planning to bottle feed your baby, we ask that you to bring your own bottles in. This means your baby can get used to the bottle they will be using once at home.

Feeding by sucking is a new skill for your baby to master. Babies who have been born early and are at the beginning of their suck feeding journey may need your help to coordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing. They will benefit from more time to pause and take a breath whilst they are learning to feed effectively. Using a teat, which slows down the flow of the milk, enables your baby to have more control over the feed, leading to more positive feeding experiences than if there was a fast flow.

You may also need to use other supportive strategies, you can read about these in the leaflet *'Bottle feeding your premature infant'* (please ask a staff member if you haven't already been given this). With support, practice and maturity your baby will be able to coordinate their suck, swallow breath pattern instinctively.

If you have chosen to bottle or mixed feed i.e. bottle and breast, a slower flow teat can support your baby. Unlike the breast, the flow of milk from a bottle is constant and therefore a slower flow can help them to co-ordinate the flow with swallowing and breathing.

A recent survey assessed the flow rates of a wide range of commercially available bottles and teats. The bottles pictured below were found to have the slowest flow in comparison to other bottles on the market and may be helpful when you are choosing a bottle and teat for your baby. We have placed the bottles in order of flow rate according to the survey. Every baby is different and if you find the bottle you choose does not work for your baby, your nurse or Speech and Language Therapist will be able to support you further.



As your baby becomes more skilled with bottle feeds, requiring less or no support from the naso-gastric feeding tube, we will support you to feed your baby responsively. You can read more about responsive bottle feeding in the leaflet '*Responsive bottle feeding*'. Please ask one of the neonatal team if you would like any of the leaflets mentioned in this information sheet.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department
Fourth floor
Salton House
St Mary's Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on **020 3312 5592**.

We have a free and premium wi-fi service at each of our five hospitals. For further information please visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Neonatal speech and language therapy
Published: October 2023
Review date: October 2026
Reference no: 5211
© Imperial College NHS Healthcare Trust