Infant Formula Feeding

Breastfeeding is always recommended as the first choice for feeding a baby. This is sometimes called "exclusive breastfeeding." That is the goal. But sometimes it is not possible. For instance:

- The baby's mother might not be physically able to breastfeed.
- The mother might not be present.
- The mother might have a health problem. She could have an infection. Or she could be dehydrated (*not have enough fluids*).
- Some mothers are taking medicines for cancer or another health problem. These medicines can get into breast milk. Some of the medicines could harm a baby.
- Some babies need extra calories. They may have been tiny at birth. Or they might be having trouble gaining weight.

Giving a baby formula in these situations is not a bad thing. Other caregivers can feed the baby. This can give the mother a break for sleep or work. It also gives the baby a chance to bond with other people.

PRECAUTIONS

- Make sure you know just how much formula the baby should get at each feeding. For example, newborns need 2 to 3 ounces every 2 to 3 hours. Markings on the bottle can help you keep track. It may be helpful to keep a log of how much the baby eats at each feeding.
- Do not give the infant anything other than breast milk or formula. A baby must not drink cow's milk, juice, soda, or other sweet drinks.
- Do not add cereal to the milk or formula, unless the baby's healthcare provider has said to do so.
- Always hold the bottle during feedings. Never prop up a bottle to feed a baby.
- Never let the baby fall asleep with a bottle in the crib.
- Never feed the baby a bottle that has been at room temperature for over two hours or from a bottle used for a previous feeding. After the baby finishes a feeding, throw away any formula left in the bottle.

BEFORE FEEDING

- Prepare a bottle of formula. If you are using formula that was stored in the refrigerator, warm it up. To do this, hold it under warm, running water or in a pan of hot water for a few minutes. Never use a microwave to warm up a bottle of formula.
- Test the temperature of the formula. Place a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should be warm, but not hot.
- Find a location that is comfortable for you and the baby. A large chair with arms to support your arms is often a good choice. You may want to put pillows under your arms and under the baby for support.
- Make sure the room temperature is OK. It should not be too hot or too cold for you and for the baby.
- Have some burp cloths nearby. You will need them to clean up spills or spit-ups.

TO FEED THE BABY

- Hold the baby close to your body. Make eye contact. This helps bonding.
- Support the baby's head in the crook of your arm. Cradle him or her at a slight angle. The baby's head should be higher than the stomach. A baby should not be fed while lying flat.
- Hold the bottle of formula at an angle. The formula should completely fill the neck of the bottle. It should cover the nipple. This will keep the baby from sucking in air. Swallowing air is uncomfortable.
- Stroke the baby's cheek or lower lip lightly with the nipple. This can get the baby to open his or her mouth. Then, slip the nipple into the baby's mouth. Sucking and swallowing should start. You might need to try different types of nipples to find the one your baby likes best.
- Let the baby tell you when he or she is done. The baby's head might turn away. Or, the baby's lips might push away the nipple. It is OK if the baby does not finish the bottle.

- You might need to burp the baby halfway through a feeding. Then, just start feeding again.
- Burp the baby again when the feeding is done.

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