Positions to Help Your Baby Drink From a Bottle

Positioning your baby correctly can help improve your baby’s drinking from a bottle. It may take some time for your baby to adjust to new feeding positions. Some babies may need help from a speech therapist.

Proper positioning can affect your baby’s strength, coordination, and energy for sucking. It can also help your baby drink a bottle easier.

There are different positions to help your baby drink from a bottle. Babies with muscles that are too floppy or too tight need to be held in positions that will help them suck better.

Holding babies in proper positions helps them relax and have better control of their shoulders, backs, bellies, and hips. It also helps them control their jaws, cheeks, lips, and tongue movements.

Head and neck:

Your baby’s head should be supported in a chin tuck position unless your doctor, nurse, or speech therapist showed you a different way. The head should not be tipped back too far.

The head should not be tipped too far forward so that the chin rests on the chest. This “in-between” chin tuck position allows for the neck and jaw muscles to work the best.
Shoulders and Arms:

Your baby’s arms should be forward with his or her hands resting on or near the bottle. If your baby’s shoulders are back in a tight position, it can cause tension in the shoulders, neck, jaw, and throat. It makes swallowing much harder.

It is also hard for your baby to swallow if the arms are too far forward. The harder your baby has to work, the less milk your baby will drink. The arms should be in a comfortable “in-between” position. In this position, your baby is more relaxed and swallowing is better controlled.

Some babies cannot have both arms forward at first. You should start with one arm forward and slowly progress to both arms. It might take some time for your baby to adjust to having both arms forward.

Back and Belly:

In many babies, their backs can be rounded close to you while during feeds. If your baby has a lot of spitting up, vomiting, or reflux, you may need to feed your baby with a straighter back and belly.

Straightening your baby’s back helps decrease the pressure on the stomach, which lowers the chance of your baby spitting up. You may need to use a pillow or rolled towel behind your child’s back for extra support.

Hips:

Your child’s hips should be bent or flexed. This is very important for babies who are tight and tend to straighten, stiffen, or scissor their legs.

If your baby’s hips are stiff, this can cause the trunk, shoulders, neck, jaw, and head muscles to be too tight and poorly controlled. By helping your baby to relax at the hips, it relaxes the other muscles needed for sucking.
Now that you’ve read this:

☐ Show your child’s nurse or doctor how to hold your child correctly during feeding time (check when done)

☐ call your child’s doctor or ☐ call ______________________

If you have any questions or concerns,

If you want to know more about child health and illness, visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children’s Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
www.theemilycenter.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter
Pinterest: pinterest.com/emilycenter

Disclaimer
The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children’s Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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Positions to Help Your Baby Suck

Name of Health Care Provider: _______________________________
Date returned: ____________

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

Would you say this handout is easy to read?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading this handout?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any questions about the subject?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, what?