

Drinking from a Cup

Your baby can begin using a regular open cup at 6 to 9 months of age. Be patient with yourself and your baby as he or she develops this skill during this messy and rewarding phase. By the time your baby is 12 to 18 months of age she will have mastered the skills to drink from a regular open cup using both hands but may continue to dribble.

When your baby can sit up without support, you can introduce an open cup to his feeding routine. Holding the cup for him, offer him small sips of water. Continue to breastfeed as breast milk continues to be the main source of nutrition for your baby's first year.

Learning to drink from a regular open cup is important for your baby's gums, teeth and oral health.

Cup You Should Choose

Look for a regular open cup. Choose a small regular open cup which will cause fewer spills and be easier for your baby to hold. The regular open cup supports his healthy cheek, bone and jaw development as he learns.

Cups to Avoid

Avoid the no-spill training cup. This type of cup does **not spill or pour out** when turned upside down. Many versions of this type exist. Some come with a small straw or spout. They have a valve which stops liquid from spilling and will require your baby to suck on either the spout or straw. A spout or straw holds the tongue down like a tongue depressor. If a child is reliant on this method of drinking, essential swallowing muscles will not develop. No-spill cups are also harder to clean and can trap germs in the spout and valve.

While no-spill cups may at first seem more convenient, they are not the best choice for your baby and are not recommended. Health professionals are seeing more cavities and speech difficulties or delays among young children who use a no-spill training cup.

Your baby does not need juice. Instead, offer water in an open cup when thirsty or between meals.

How to Use an Open Cup

At 9-12 months (preferably 12 months) cow's milk can be offered at mealtime in the cup. Hold the cup for her as she learns to take small sips. Continue to breastfeed for up to 2 years and beyond.



If bottle feeding, wean your baby completely from the bottle and move to using only an open cup before 18 months of age.

While Your Baby is Learning

Don't be discouraged if your baby doesn't master this new skill right away. It takes time and patience. Expect some messiness during this phase.

When any liquid other than water is sipped frequently it makes an acid that attacks your baby's tooth enamel for about 20 minutes to one hour. This causes cavities. By offering only water between meals and milk with meals in an open cup, you are helping to limit how often baby teeth are exposed to these cavity causing acid attacks.

Learning to use a regular open cup at planned meal and snack times is an important part of your child developing healthy feeding practices.

If your child is thirsty at bedtime, offer water in a regular open cup before putting them to bed.

Cleaning your baby's gums or teeth in the morning and at bedtime is a healthy routine to start early.

For more information about open cups or other oral health questions contact the oral health professional at your local public health office.

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