



Training Cups

During a child's development, your child will move from breast or bottle feeding to using a cup. At this stage, a regular cup can be introduced for drinking liquids. You may decide to use a training cup during this transition. A training cup is a plastic cup with a bill shaped spout.

There are two types of training cups. They are:

- regular training cup – it **leaks** if it is turned upside down.
- no-spill training cup – it does **not** leak when you turn it upside down. This is because the no-spill training cup has a valve under the spout that keeps the liquid from spilling. To drink, the child must put his lips around the spout and suck. This sucking action is the same motion used when drinking from a bottle. As a result, your child will not learn the more mature pattern required to drink from a regular cup.

No-Spill Training Cup Concerns

While no-spill cups are convenient for parents and caregivers, health professionals are beginning to see more cavities and speech difficulties or delays among children who use no-spill cups. This is because children suck from these cups like baby bottles. This type of training cup is not recommended.

Some concerns are:

- cavities are caused when children suck milk, juice and other sugary drinks for hours at a time or even while they sleep. When sweet

liquids are sucked or sipped frequently they make an acid that attacks the tooth enamel for about 20 minutes each time. All fruit juice, sweetened tea, pop, milk and formula contain sugars.

- future speech difficulties or delays. While sucking from no-spill sippy cups, children may not develop mature muscle movements.
- increased risk of ear infections when training cup or bottle is used while child is lying on his or her back.
- no-spill cups can trap germs in the valve and are difficult to clean thoroughly.

What to Look for in a Training Cup

- no valve
- a snap-on or screw-on lid with a spout
- two handles
- a base that pulls the cup upright when it tips, keeping spills to a minimum.



Photo courtesy of Medical Media Services

Drinking From a Training Cup

When using a training cup consider the following:

- ensure the training cup is thoroughly washed with soap and water between uses.
 - if offering a training cup limit how often your child drinks from it. Do not use it as a pacifier.
 - if your child is thirsty between meals or at bedtime, offer water in a regular cup.
 - do not let your child constantly sip liquids containing sugar, such as juice drinks and milk.
- avoid the habit of keeping it within reach while riding in a car or stroller as this may cause frequent sipping.
 - do not let your child carry the training cup around. This may cause choking. If the child falls while drinking from a cup, the child can injure the teeth and mouth.

Once your child has learned how to sip, the training cup has achieved its purpose. It should be set aside and the child can use a regular cup. Remember, children are able to learn to use a regular cup as early as 6 months of age.

For more information contact the dental health educator at your local public health office.



Photo courtesy of Microsoft Clipart

**I'm all
grown up –
I drink
from a cup.**