

# HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

## WHY AVOID PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING

Propped bottle feeding is when you or a caregiver bottle feeds your baby without holding them and the bottle is being propped (or held up) by another object (like a pillow or blanket). This is unsafe, even if you or a caregiver is close by.

### REASONS TO AVOID PROPPED BOTTLE FEEDING

#### Higher chance of choking or aspiration

- If you prop a bottle and then go do something else, you are not able to watch your baby closely. If your baby is not ready for the extra liquid flowing or if the bottle is not removed, your baby can choke.
- If your baby falls asleep before finishing the bottle, they may breathe in the liquid (aspirate), rather than swallow it.
- When your baby is leaning back or lying down, liquid can go down the wrong tube to the lungs rather than the stomach.

#### Higher chance of ear infections

- Lying back or lying down while feeding causes liquid to pool in the back of the mouth. This liquid can back up into their ears through the tubes that run between the throat and ears. Bacteria can then enter causing an ear infection.
- Frequent ear infections can lead to long term damage.

#### Higher chance of tooth decay

- When the normal germs from the mouth mix with the liquid in the bottle, it produces an acid that can lead to tooth decay. This is more common with a propped bottle since the liquid pools in your baby's mouth.
- Baby teeth are important and hold the space for adult teeth. Baby teeth also help your baby to chew and eat.

#### Higher chance of overfeeding

- Since the liquid from a propped bottle keeps coming out until the bottle is empty, your baby may drink more than their body needs. This can cause an unexpected growth trend, such as higher weight gain compared to their length.
- It can also make it harder to learn and follow your baby's hunger and fullness signs.

#### Less interaction

- Nutrition is only part of the feeding experience.
- It misses the opportunity for a warm and loving interaction between you and your baby.
- Holding your baby while feeding helps to develop a close bond.

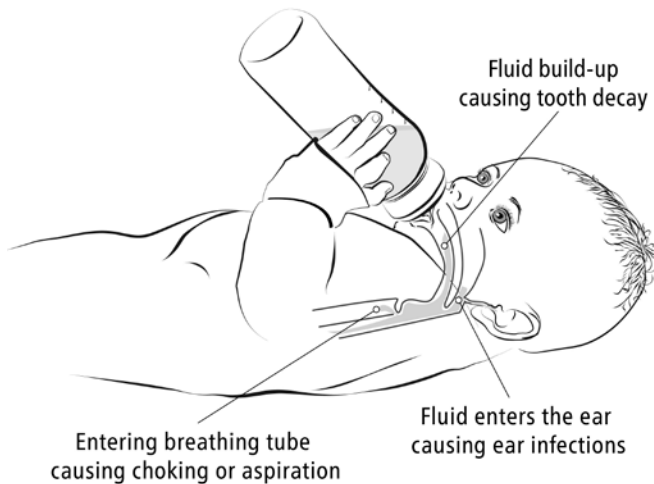
It is illegal to sell propped bottle systems that promote unsupervised feedings in Canada.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

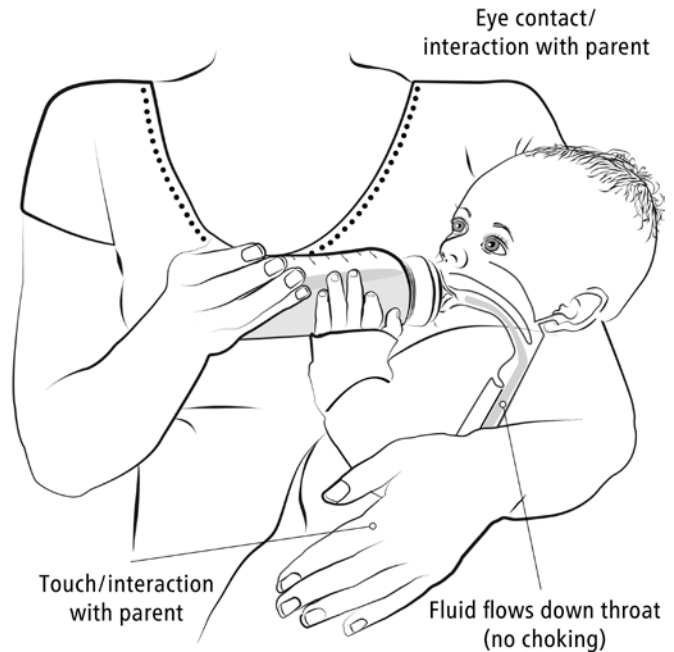
1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/feedingkids](http://york.ca/feedingkids)

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white star or sunburst icon above the text "York Region" in a white serif font, all set against a dark blue background.

## INCORRECT



## CORRECT



## HOW TO BOTTLE FEED SAFELY

- Hold your baby and the bottle when [bottle-feeding](#) for safety and to feel secure.
- Touch, talk and have eye contact while feeding.
- Follow cues to make sure your baby is feeding with a calm face and relaxed hands and arms.
- Hold your baby almost fully upright (not in a laying down position). Keep the bottle parallel to the ground so the nipple is  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of liquid. Near the end of the feeding when there is less fluid, tip the bottle up.

## FOLLOW THEIR HUNGER AND FULLNESS SIGNS

Holding your baby and the bottle will make it easier to see their signs of hunger and fullness.

### Signs that your baby may be hungry include:

- Restlessness
- Rooting (opening their mouth, searching to suck and sucking on contact)
- Sucking on a hand

### Signs that your baby may be full include:

- Sucking actions slow down
- Losing interest or letting go of the nipple
- Rooting will stop
- Turning head away

Your baby will drink more at some feeds and less at other feeds. Follow their hunger and fullness signs to feed them the amount that they need.

If you are unsure whether your baby is drinking enough, talk to your baby's health care provider.

## TAKE CARE OF YOUR BABY'S GUMS AND TEETH

- Clean their gums, inside of cheeks and roof of mouth with a clean, soft damp cloth daily.
- Once they have teeth, brush them gently, at least twice a day, using a small, soft toothbrush and water.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For information on feeding babies or safely preparing [infant formula](#), visit [york.ca/feedingkids](http://york.ca/feedingkids) and [unlockfood.ca](http://unlockfood.ca)
- For information on breastfeeding or offering breastmilk, visit [york.ca/breastfeeding](http://york.ca/breastfeeding)
- To speak to a registered dietitian or registered nurse at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

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