

Weaning From the Bottle - Resistance

Definition

- You want to stop bottle feeding, but your child resists
- Excessive bottle feeding means more than 4 times per day after 6 months
- Excessive bottle feeding also means giving the bottle for the wrong reasons
- Delayed bottle feeding means beyond 12 months
- Note: The AAP recommends complete weaning from the bottle by 15 months at the latest.

Complications of Excessive or Prolonged Bottle Feeding

Excessive bottle feeding can cause problems. It should be considered an important problem if it causes any of the below:

- Refusal to eat any solid foods and over 6 months old. Result: hard to start after 9 months old. Reason: it's easier to suck than to chew.
- Anemia confirmed by a routine test at the age of 1 year
- Baby-bottle tooth decay
- Overweight from drinking too much milk (over 32 ounces)
- Lack of interest in playing with others. The child prefers sucking from the bottle.
- Speech delays because bottle in mouth.
- Sleep problems: awakes at night for refills of a bottle
- Older children often strongly resist weaning. Bad habits become harder to break with each passing month. After age 3, taking away the bottle may be a battle.

If your child has any of these problems, read the next section. Follow the tips on how to help your child become a better eater. You can do this without having to wean him all the way.

Care Advice

How to Stop Excessive Bottle Feedings

1. **What You Should Know About Excessive Bottle Feedings:**
 - Bottle feeding too much can cause health and behavior problems. Those problems are listed above in Health Information.
 - Decrease bottle feedings so they don't cause or worsen any of those problems.
 - Here are some tips to help.
2. **Reduce the Number of Milk Feedings Your Child Gets to 3 per Day:**
 - Get your child on a schedule of 3 main meals a day.
 - Also, offer 2 nutritious snacks that are not bottle feeding.

3. **Start Some Feedings from a Sippy Cup (if this was not done at 6 months):**
 - Cup feedings are needed as substitutes for bottle feedings. This is needed regardless of the age at which weaning occurs.
 - The longer he doesn't use a cup, the less willing he'll try it.
 - Ideally, start daily cup feedings by 6 months of age. This is a natural way to keep bottle feedings from becoming overly important.
4. **Start Baby Foods or Solids (if this was not done at 6 months):**
 - The longer he doesn't taste solid foods, the less willing he'll try them.
 - Ideally, start spoon feedings by 6 months of age. This is another natural way to keep bottle feedings from becoming overly important.
5. **Don't Allow Carrying Around a Bottle During the Day:**
 - Stop this immediately.
 - The companion bottle encourages habit drinking (comfort drinking).
 - It also can interfere with normal development that needs speech or two-handed play. It can also lead to problems with tooth decay.
 - You can say, "It's not good for you to carry a bottle around". Say, "You're too old for that." Another option: "Your doctor said it was bad for your teeth".
6. **Stop Using Bottle Feeding to Fall Asleep or Allowing a Bottle in the Crib for Sleep:**
 - Stop this immediately.
 - All babies can handle a 7 to 8 hour fast by 6 months of age. That means they can easily sleep through the night.
 - But if they are fed until asleep, they will learn a bad habit. After normal night awakenings, they will want a bottle to get back to sleep.
 - Also, don't allow your child to take a bottle to bed. This will cause sleep problems as above. Also, taking a bottle of milk to bed may cause severe tooth decay.
 - Offer the explanations suggested above in # 5.
7. **Stop Any Night Time Feedings:**
 - Ideally, this should have been done before 6 months.
 - If not, ask for help or information in stopping night time feedings.
8. **Start Complete Weaning Now or Later:**
 - Once you have made these healthy changes, you don't need to do anything more. It's your choice when to wean your child.
 - After 12 months of age, the bottle becomes more important to your child. It becomes more of a bad habit with each passing month. Weaning will become harder.
 - Caution: Do not start weaning if your family is under stress (such as moving). Also wait if your child is under stress. An example of this is entering a new child care.

[How to Stop Bottle Feeding Completely \(Weaning\)](#)

1. **Delayed Weaning from the Bottle - How to Stop Bottle Feeding Completely:**
 - Delayed weaning from the bottle means your child is over 1 year old.
 - You want to stop bottle feeding, but your child doesn't want to give up the bottle.
 - Also called weaning resistance.
 - This bad habit will become harder to break with each passing month.
 - Here are some tips that should help.
2. **Offer Milk in a Cup Before Each Bottle Feeding:**
 - Use formula if your child is under 1 year of age.
 - Use whole milk if your child is 1 year of age or older.
3. **Gradually Stop Bottle Feedings During the Day:**
 - Weaning to the cup should always be done slowly and with love. The "cold turkey" or abrupt withdrawal approach will make your child very upset.
 - Get rid of one bottle feeding every 3 to 4 days. Use your child's reaction to figure out how fast this should be done. Replace each bottle feeding with a cup feeding and extra holding.
 - Stop bottle feedings in the following order: midday, late afternoon, morning, and finally bedtime.
 - For most children, the bedtime feeding is usually the most important one. In giving up this feeding, slowly decrease the amount of milk in the bottle. Do this each day for a week.
 - After 2, it may be easier to pick a day and stop all bottles abruptly.
4. **Replace Bottle Feedings with Holding your Child:**
 - Do not offer a bottle after you have completed the weaning process.
 - Respond to ongoing requests for a bottle by holding your child.
 - You can explain that bottles are for little babies. You might have your child help you carry the bottles to a neighbor's house.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

- Your child is over 6 months of age and won't eat any baby foods
- Your child is over 6 months of age and won't drink from a cup
- Your child has tooth decay
- You think your child has anemia
- This approach to weaning is unsuccessful after you have tried it for 1 month
- Your child is over 2 years old
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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