



Breastfeeding Committee of
Saskatchewan

Breastfeeding

Finger-Feeding Your Baby With a Feeding Tube

This method of feeding should be used only after instruction by a qualified caregiver.

Quick Facts

- Finger-feeding with a feeding tube is a temporary way to feed baby.

**For further information,
contact a
Lactation Consultant,
Public Health Nurse,
your Doctor
or local Maternity Ward**

A Feeding tube is used:

- As another method of feeding when a mother is not available to breastfeed her baby.
- To encourage baby to develop a suck/swallow pattern which is more like breastfeeding.

Getting Ready

- Make sure your nails are short and clean, especially on the finger you will use to finger-feed.
- Wash your hands.
- Gather the supplies you will need to finger-feed your baby. Place supplies on a clean cloth:
 - expressed breast milk or formula in a bottle, warmed to room temperature
 - 36" #5 French feeding tube
 - bowl with warm water
 - syringe to clean tube
 - tape

Using the Feeding Tube

- Place the large end of the feeding tube in the bottle below the level of milk. Hold in place with tape or by placing the tube through an enlarged hole in the nipple.
- Use the finger closest to the size of the mother's nipple.
- Tape the opposite end of the feeding tube on the pad of your index finger even with the tip of your finger.
- The bottle should not be higher than the baby's head or milk will run too quickly.
- As baby sucks, the fluid will move quickly down the tube.
- It takes 15-20 minutes, or less, for baby to take one ounce, or 30 ml (one ounce), of the milk.



Remember:

- Check the feeding tube before each use.
- Tubes become stiff and should be thrown out after about one week.

Feeding your Baby

- Hold your baby in your arms in the cradle position, on your lap, or securely in an infant chair.
- Using the taped finger touch baby’s lip to encourage baby to open mouth wide like a yawn.
- Slide finger into baby’s mouth, the nail bed should rest on the baby’s tongue. The skin part (pad) of your finger should be where the hard and soft palate join (on the roof of the mouth), about 4 cm (1 1/2”) into the baby’s mouth. Gently rub the roof of baby’s mouth, to start the baby sucking.
- After baby sucks 3 or 4 times, lower the bottle below baby’s head.
- Burp the baby after each 15ml (1/2 ounce) of milk.
- Write the time your baby was fed and amount taken on the Baby’s Feeding Record.

Cleaning the Feeding Tube

In the Hospital

- Use a clean feeding tube each time.
- Throw away the used feeding tube after each use.

At Home

- **Do not boil** the feeding tube!
- Wash the tube with hot water and dish soap.
- Use a syringe with hot water to rinse inside the tube.
- Push air through the tube and hang to dry.
- Take the syringe apart.
- Store the tube and syringe in a clean container.

Stay in touch with your doctor, nurse or lactation consultant if finger-feeding with a feeding tube.