

BREASTFEEDING ANSWERS

Finger Feeding

Finger feeding involves feeding milk to your baby through a feeding tube that is attached to your finger. It can be used with any baby that needs extra milk or is not able to latch to your breast. The motion of your baby's tongue and jaw is similar with finger feeding to when your baby breastfeeds.

You will need:

- Supplement fluid – expressed breast milk or a breast milk substitute if breast milk is not available
- 36-inch #5 French feeding tube
- A bottle with a nipple
- Small syringe for cleaning the tube

Setting up to finger feed:

1. Wash your hands. Be sure your finger nail on the finger you will use is short.
2. Make the bottle nipple hole larger by cutting it with clean scissors.
3. Insert the smaller tip of the feeding tube through the bottom of the hole on the bottle nipple.
4. Pour the supplement into the bottle.
5. Put the larger end of the feeding tube into the bottle making sure it is covered with milk.
6. Screw the nipple and cap onto the bottle. This will prevent spilling.
7. Place the bottle at the level of your breast either on a flat surface nearby or in the pocket of your shirt. Caution: If the bottle is too high, the milk will flow too fast and your baby could choke. If the bottle is too low, your baby may become frustrated or get tired easily.
8. Line up the end of the feeding tube so that it sits on the soft part of your index finger. The tip of the feeding tube should be level with your fingertip. Tape the tube onto your finger behind the second joint so that your baby cannot suck the tube into their mouth.
9. Get into a comfortable position.
10. Gently touch your baby's lips with your finger until their mouth opens wide.
11. Insert your finger so that the soft part of your finger is facing the top of your baby's mouth. Your baby should start sucking on your finger and will receive milk through the tube.



Cleaning the tube

- Clean the bottle and nipple as usual.
- Rinse the tube well with a syringe filled with hot water. Soap is not needed but if you choose to use soap, make sure the tube is rinsed very well.
- Use the syringe to force 1-2 plungers of air through the tube to get rid of any water.
- Air dry the tube in a clean area.
- Use a new tube when the tube becomes stiff, brittle or discoloured.

How long should I finger feed my baby?

Finger feeding should not be used for longer than 24 hours at a time. There are concerns that some babies can become dependent on finger feeding if using this method for longer than 24 hours.

It is important for you and your baby to have regular appointments with a breastfeeding clinic or breastfeeding specialist while finger feeding. These appointments help us to make decisions on how long to finger feed and how much supplement is needed.

For more information call us at 1-800-563-2808.

