

Feeding Your Baby with a Cleft Lip and/or Palate

As you welcome your newborn baby, feeding is one of the first needs parents will have to meet. Infants born with a cleft lip and palate need time like any other baby to learn to feed. Depending on the type of cleft your baby has, there may be less sucking strength with feedings. Several bottles and nipples are available to help your baby feed and grow.

Feeding a Baby with a Cleft Lip Only

These infants usually feed without difficulty by breast or bottle. A lactation consultant can help you find a breastfeeding position that works for both you and baby. It is important that you have regular visits with your baby's pediatrician to check your baby's weight and growth. As long as your baby is gaining weight when you go to the pediatrician, there is no need to stop breastfeeding or use special bottles. If your baby does need to have some bottle feedings along with breastfeeds, then you may pump your breast milk and give it to the baby in a bottle.

Feeding a Baby with a Cleft Palate (With or Without a Cleft Lip)

Babies with cleft palates usually need special bottles to feed. For mothers wanting to breastfeed, giving your expressed (pumped) milk in a bottle will give your baby all of the benefits from breast milk. Most babies with a cleft palate *are not able to exclusively breastfeed* due to less sucking strength from their cleft palate. These babies often do best and have better weight gain with mostly bottle feedings. Some attachment at the breast is possible if the baby is not having difficulty gaining weight. Your baby's pediatrician, the lactation consultant, and the speech therapist can help you know which feeding methods and bottles will work for your baby.

Giving Your Baby Breast Milk

Your breast milk has antibodies to help prevent infections in the baby. After delivery of the baby in the hospital, a mother may start using an electric breast pump. Double pumping of the breasts is recommended 8 times a day, or every 3 hours for 10 to 15 minutes at each pumping session. The lactation consultant can help adjust the pumping schedule to meet both the mother's and infant's needs. Any amounts of breast milk you are able to feed your baby will benefit them.

Before a mother leaves the hospital, arrangements may be made to rent a hospital-grade electric breast pump. A social worker and lactation consultant can help with the rental and possible insurance coverage.

Bottles and Nipples

There are several bottles and nipples recommended for babies with clefts. The milk for your baby will flow easier with the following bottles and nipples.

Mead Johnson Cleft Palate Nurser

This is a soft plastic bottle that needs to be gently squeezed as the baby sucks with pauses as the baby swallows. The nipple has a cross cut for an easier milk flow. Practice squeezing and releasing the bottle with your breast milk or formula before you feed the baby for the first time. Remember to pause to let the baby swallow.



- 812-429-5000
- 800-222-9123
- www.meadjohnson.com

Ross Orthodontic Nipple

This nipple has a wider base and sometimes a fast flow cross cut. Some babies will do better with this nipple. It may be placed on the Mead Johnson Cleft Nurser squeeze bottle.



- 800-258-7677
- www.rossstore.com

Medela Haberman Feeder

This bottle has a soft nipple with a slit. The bottle does not have to be squeezed. The nipple has 3 raised line markings on it that control how fast the milk will flow. The longest line will have the easiest flow. Gentle pressure may also be placed on the nipple if needed to promote better flow and feeding. The lactation consultant and speech therapist can help you learn how to use this bottle.



- 815-363-1166
- 800-435-8316
- www.medela.com
- Local pharmacy

Suggestions for Feeding Your Baby

- Feed the baby in an upright position
- Burp the baby frequently
- Babies do better if the feeding is able to be done in 30 minutes. If the feedings start to take longer than 40 minutes you may need to change to a different nipple or bottle. Call the cleft palate team coordinator.
- If your baby is having difficulty gaining weight, the pediatrician may add a powder to your pumped breast milk or formula to add extra calories to help your baby grow. This may only be done by the baby's pediatrician.

[STONY BROOK CLEFT PALATE-CRANIOFACIAL CENTER](#)