

## Let's Talk About...

# Bottle propping

When babies are fed by a bottle there are many risks that can occur if it is done incorrectly. Whether it is rushing to get ready in the morning, or being distracted, you may be tempted to prop your baby's bottle. This is when you give your baby a bottle by leaning it against a pillow, or other support, rather than holding the baby and the bottle.

### Why is bottle propping discouraged?

Bottle propping may save you time, it can also lead to you and your child spending more time in the doctor's and dentist's office. Here's why:



### Ear infections

If you bottle-feed your baby while they are lying flat, they will be more prone to ear infections. Your baby has an opening from the back of the throat to the ears called Eustachian (you-STAY-shun) tubes. When you feed your baby with a propped bottle, the liquid pools in the mouth and can go into your baby's ears through the Eustachian tube. Bacteria can enter through the tube into the ear and cause an ear infection. Prolonged ear infections can cause hearing loss, which can make it harder for your baby to speak and learn.

### Choking

Bottle propping makes it easier for your baby to choke. This is partly because you are not watching your baby closely. Liquid continues to come out of a propped bottle until it is empty and may cause your baby to choke. If your baby has fallen asleep before finishing the bottle, they may breathe in (aspirate) the liquid instead of swallowing it. Bottle propping also makes it more likely that the liquid will go down the wrong tube. This is because the openings to the trachea (TRAY-key-a) and esophagus (ee-SOF-a-gus) are close to each other.

### Tooth decay

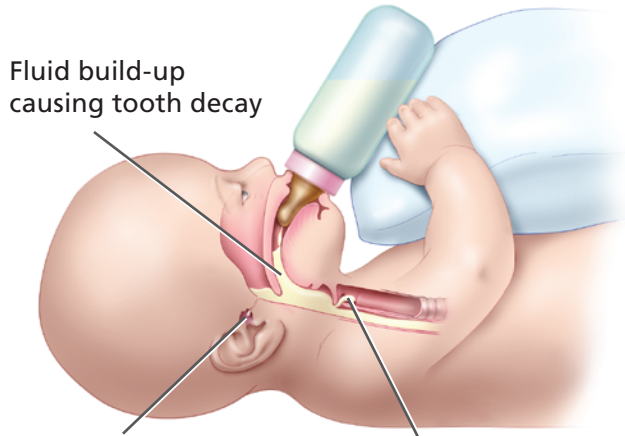
If you prop your baby's bottle, liquid pools in the mouth. This can cause tooth decay as soon as your baby's teeth appear. When normal germs inside the mouth combine with food or drink, an acid forms. This acid can cause tooth decay. Saliva naturally rinses most of the acid away. If you prop your baby's bottle, formula stays in the mouth and decays their teeth. Baby teeth act as guides for the permanent teeth that come in later, so it is important that they do not decay or fall out early.

**Incorrect**

Fluid build-up causing tooth decay

Entering ear through Eustachian tube

Entering trachea causing choking

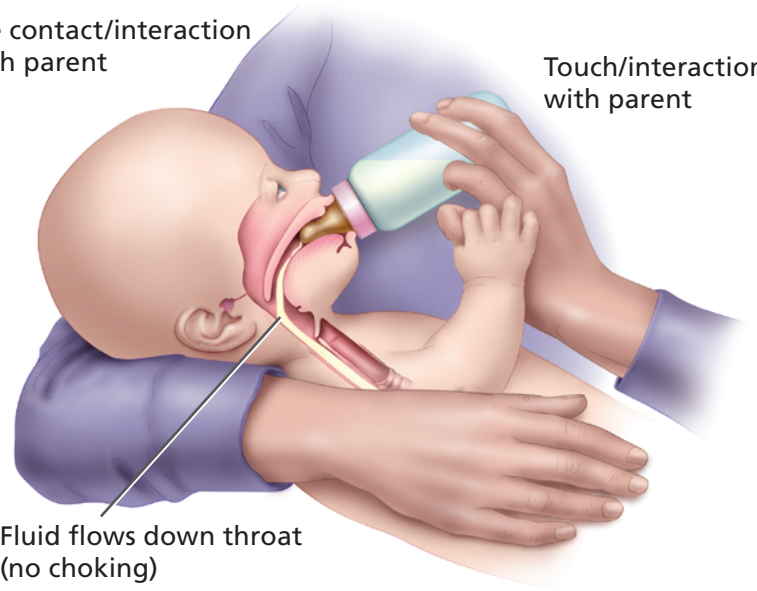


**Correct**

Eye contact/interaction with parent

Touch/interaction with parent

Fluid flows down throat (no choking)



**Less interaction with parents**

Along with the physical effects, bottle propping can also lead to a weaker bond between a parent and their child. One of the best ways to have a close relationship with your baby is holding them during feedings. Nutrition is only one part of the feeding.

**How can I feed my baby safely?**

- Hold your baby in a semi-upright position while feeding them. Do not prop their bottles.

- Use feeding time as a time to get to know your baby. Babies respond to touch, eye contact, and speech.
- Don't give your baby food or drinks at bedtime. This type of routine may cause early tooth decay. Try filling a bottle with water if your baby must have it at bedtime to sleep.
- If you can, use a pacifier at bedtime instead of a bottle.

**Notes**

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