

9G: COMMON ITEMS FOR SUPPORTING FEEDING

Below are examples of ordinary items which may be found in your location and community that can assist with supporting a child's feeding development. Use this list as a guide for identifying common items and sparking more ideas about what other items may work well to assist the children in your care.



For learning more creative ways to enhance mealtimes, refer to Appendix 9I.

FEEDING SUPPLY LIST

Feeding babies and children does not usually require fancy tools or supplies. What's more important is the way in which we feed babies. In this section, we will share basic feeding supplies for children of all ages and simple tips for using each item.

BOTTLES³⁶

TIPS:

- ① Have different bottle sizes (120 ml/ 4 fl. oz., 180 ml/ 6 fl. oz., 270 ml/ 9 fl. oz., 330 ml/ 11 fl. oz.). Smaller bottles are easier for caregivers and babies to hold. Larger bottles offer more liquids at one time.
- ② As babies become older and take more liquids during feedings, larger bottles can be advantageous.
- ③ Specialty bottles can be helpful for certain babies with cleft lip/palate or babies born early (premature).





The Premature Baby

Babies born early often feed better with very slow flowing nipples. “Premie Nipples” and “Premie Specialty Feeders” are available. Caregivers can also try other specialty bottles (Special Needs Feeder, Pigeon Feeder) or slow flow nipples, syringes, spoons or cups.

Four Types of Specialty Bottles for Babies with Cleft Lip/Palate

- Cleft Lip/Palate Nurser by Mead Johnson
- Dr. Brown’s Specialty Feeding System with one-way valve
- Special Needs Feeder by Medela
- Pigeon Feeder with one-way valve (nipple can be used with any bottle)

CLEFT LIP/PALATE NURSER

Description: This is a soft, squeezable bottle that works well for babies born with cleft lip and/or palate. It is very low-cost. The feeder squeezes the bottle to allow liquid to flow into the baby’s mouth. This way, the baby does not need to suck, which is hard or sometimes impossible with a cleft.

TIPS FOR USING:

- ① Use with a softer, shorter nipple instead of the long, yellow nipple that comes with it.
- ② Liquid should flow easily when squeezing the bottle, but it should not flow very fast.
- ③ Feeders squeeze the bottle only when the baby is sucking. When a baby stops for a break or to breathe, stop squeezing.
- ④ When squeezing, use steady and firm pressure. Count to 3 (1—2—3). Reduce the firmness of squeezing starting at the 2—3 count. Pause, observe how baby does and begin the process again.
- ⑤ Air bubbles in the liquid indicate that a baby is successfully getting the milk.
- ⑥ Coughing, choking or sputtering can mean that squeezing may be too firm and fast, the length of squeezing may be too long, or the time between squeezes may be too short.





Practice before feeding baby! Put water in a feeder and practice squeezing the liquid. This is a great way to learn how firmly you must squeeze the bottle when feeding a baby.

DR. BROWN'S SPECIALTY FEEDER SYSTEM

Description: This is a bottle with a special one-way valve that works well for babies born with cleft lip and/or palate. The valve keeps the nipple full of liquid and removes the need for a baby to suck, which can be hard or sometimes impossible with a cleft.

TIPS FOR USING:

- ① Because liquid stays in the nipple (instead of flowing back down into the bottle), a baby will latch on to the nipple which then easily releases liquid into their mouth.
- ② A baby can control the rate of feeding, taking breaks as needed.



SPECIAL NEEDS FEEDER

Description: This is a bottle with a special one-way valve that works well for babies born with cleft lip and/or palate. The valve keeps the nipple full of liquid and removes the need for a baby to suck, which can be hard or sometimes impossible with a cleft. Feeders can also squeeze the bottle to assist a baby with feeding (similar to the cleft lip/palate nurser). Lastly, this bottle has a soft nipple that has a “Y” cut that changes the flow of liquid into a baby’s mouth. This bottle is also called the “Haberman Feeder.”

TIPS FOR USING:

- ① Because liquid stays in the nipple (instead of flowing back down into the bottle), a baby will latch on to the nipple which then easily releases liquid into their mouth.
- ② A baby can control the rate of feeding, taking breaks as needed.
- ③ A feeder can assist with the rate of feeding by squeezing the bottle and/or changing the position of the “Y” cut nipple.
- ④ Liquid should flow easily when squeezing the bottle, but it should not flow very fast.
- ⑤ Feeders squeeze the bottle only when the baby is sucking. When a baby stops for a break or to breathe, stop squeezing.
- ⑥ When squeezing, use steady and firm pressure. Count to 3 (1—2—3). Reduce the firmness of squeezing starting at the 2—3 count. Pause, observe how baby does and begin the process again.
- ⑦ When positioning the nipple, three lines on each nipple indicate the flow rate being used. When the nipple is turned in a baby’s mouth, the “Y” cut changes position thereby impacting the flow.



PIGEON FEEDER

Description: This is a nipple with a special one-way valve that works well for babies born with cleft lip and/or palate. The nipple comes in two sizes and it can be used with any bottle. The valve keeps the nipple full of liquid and removes the need for a baby to suck, which can be hard or sometimes impossible with a cleft.



TIPS FOR USING:

- ① Two sizes: Smaller size nipples work well for newborns because they have a slower flow. Larger size nipples work well for babies older than 6 weeks because their flow is slightly faster.
- ② Loosening the nipple → faster flowing liquid.
- ③ Tightening the nipple → slower flowing liquid.
- ④ Because liquid stays in the nipple (instead of flowing back down into the bottle), a baby will latch on to the nipple which then easily releases liquid into their mouth.
- ⑤ A baby can control the rate of feeding, taking breaks as needed.
- ⑥ The soft side of the nipple rests on a baby's tongue while the firm side rests on their gums.
- ⑦ A notch (air vent) close to the nipple rim is a helpful way to correctly place the nipple in a baby's mouth. The notch should be directly under the baby's nose when offering a bottle.

NIPPLES

TIPS:

- ① Have a variety of nipple levels (level 1, 2, 3, preemie level) or flows (fast flow, slow flow, moderate flow).
- ② Have a variety of shapes of nipples (short, long, wide, narrow). Some nipples are softer or harder, and babies can have a preference.
- ③ The flow of liquid will be different depending on the nipple used. Typically, the higher the nipple level (the greater the number on the nipple), the faster the liquid will flow.
- ④ Match the nipple with each baby. Some babies will need the nipple level changed over time. Some babies do not ever need the nipple level changed.



PACIFIERS/BINKIES/SOOTHERS/DUMMIES

TIPS:

- ① Have a variety of different pacifier types (small, large, orthodontic, etc.). Some babies prefer certain pacifiers rather than others. If a baby does not show interest in a pacifier, try offering a different type of pacifier or his hands to suck on.
- ② Pacifiers can be wonderful for helping a baby prepare for or end a feeding. Offer a pacifier for a baby to suck on right before a bottle to promote better sucking and a calmer, smoother feeding. Offer a pacifier directly after a feeding to help calm a baby if they become fussy once a bottle is finished.
- ③ Pacifiers are helpful at managing GER/GERD when given to babies after and in-between feedings.



BLANKETS, TOWELS, CLOTHS, SCARVES, PILLOWS, CUSHIONS AND FOAM

TIPS:

- ① Blankets, towels, cloths and scarves can be used to swaddle a young baby (0-3 months old) who may need extra support and comfort during a feeding.
- ② These items can be used in a variety of ways to support a baby in your arms or on your lap. It's important that babies and caregivers are comfortable during feedings, and the use of these items can make all of the difference.
- ③ Blankets, towels, cloths, scarves, pillows, cushions and foam can be used to improve the positioning of a child when fed in a caregiver's arms or in a chair/seat, the floor or at a table. Other helpful items may include stuffed animals, bean bags, clothing, wedges, yoga blocks, books, boxes, etc.
- ④ Foam can be cut into different shapes to support the positioning of a child or it can be used to make adaptive equipment to support self-feeding. It can also be used as a wedge placed under a child who needs to be in an elevated position following meals or at night (such as a child with GER or GERD).





CUPS AND SPOONS

TIPS:

- ① Have a variety of different cups and spoons available. Some children prefer certain types of cups or spoons based on the texture, weight, color, spout, bowl size, etc. Certain cups and spoons make self-feeding much easier for a child, too. When possible, choose a cup and spoon based on the child's preferences, strengths and needs.

BOWLS, PLATES AND PLACEMATS

TIPS:

- ① Have a variety of different bowls and plates available. Some children are more successful self-feeders when using certain types of bowls and plates based on the size, shape, texture, weight, depth, color, etc. When possible, choose a bowl and plate based on the child's strengths, preferences, and needs.
- ② Use placemats or other methods to adhere items to tables and trays. Sticky or suction cup bowls, plates and mats are great at not moving during meals. Some children do best with materials that have many colors, pictures or shapes, which help them stay focused. For children with visual impairments, adhering a black piece of paper or cloth to their tray (placing food and drink on top) can make finding their food and drink much easier.





Placemats are not only fun but functional, too. They can be made of many different materials to suit a child's needs. Placemats with edges (middle photo) are excellent for helping children with visual impairments find their food and learn to feed themselves.



This plate has sticky suction cups on the bottom that help hold it in place on a table, tray or the floor. This can be very helpful for new self-feeders or children who have trouble holding a plate/bowl in place while eating.

CHAIRS, TRAYS AND TABLES

TIPS:

- ① Have a variety of seating options available.
- ② Not all chairs, tables and trays will work with every child. A good chair, table or tray may need to be modified to fit the specific needs of each child.
- ③ Choose a seating arrangement that is comfortable for the caregiver, too. Caregivers and children should be at eye level with one another.



There are many different chair, table and tray options. Using blankets, towels, cloth, foam, wedges, stuffed pillowcases, bean bags, etc., to create improved comfort and stability for a child is key.

TOOTHBRUSHES AND TEETHING TOYS

TIPS:

- ① Tooth brushing should start when the very first tooth appears. Healthy teeth lead to a healthy mouth and body.
- ② Activities such as tooth brushing, offering teething toys or giving children safe, non-edible items to mouth (safely explore with their mouths) are terrific ways to improve a child's mouth muscles for feeding as well as for talking.



Toothbrushes come in a variety of types and sizes. From finger brushes (top middle photo) to baby/toddler brushes (bottom middle and far right photos) to electronic brushes (far left photo). Find a brush that matches a child's age, size and specific needs.



Teething objects are great for building oral motor skills for feeding and talking. They are also good for children who are getting new teeth or those who have strong sensory needs.

COMMON ITEMS	EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO USE
Stuffed Animals Pillows Blankets Towels Washcloths Fabric Foam Cushions	⇒ For positioning: Extra physical support for a child during feedings while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Held or seated in caregivers lap ▪ Seated in chair ▪ Seated on floor ○ For comfort: Extra physical comfort for a child and caregiver during feedings using these items
Trays Boxes Blocks Bricks Books Planks of Wood Flat boards (wooden puzzle board) Small Trash Bins Buckets Step/Foot Stools Firm Cushions Magazines duct taped together	⇒ For positioning: Extra physical support and stability for a child's trunk, feet and arms while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Held or seated in caregivers lap ▪ Seated in chair ▪ Seated on floor ○ For comfort: Extra physical comfort and security for a child and caregiver during feedings using these items ⇒ For seating: Additional seating for a child when an appropriate chair/table/etc. cannot be found
Baking sheets Placemats Jars Cans Plastic containers Rubber Tires and Balls, Wood Pieces, Velcro, Tool Handles, Hair Ties, Rubber Bands	⇒ For holding food or liquid: Alternatives for typical feeding supplies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Substitutions for plates, bowls and cups ○ For assisting self-feeding: Ways to adapt (change) utensils to be more useable by children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using these items with existing utensils and cups making them easier to hold and manipulate
Pillow cases Blankets Towels Fabric Clothing	⇒ For swaddling, wrapping, holding and carrying: Alternatives for typical supplies one might use for holding/wrapping a child

