



Transitioning from Bottle to Cup

Helping Your Child Make the Change with Confidence

Learning to drink from a cup is an important developmental milestone. While every child develops at their own pace, most children are ready to begin learning between **6 and 9 months** and can fully transition away from the bottle by **12–18 months**.

The goal isn't perfection overnight—it's steady progress.

Why Transition Away from the Bottle?

Prolonged bottle use may increase the risk of:

- Tooth decay (especially bedtime bottles)
 - Delayed oral motor development
 - Drinking more milk than needed
 - Reduced appetite for solid foods
 - Iron deficiency
 - Difficulty transitioning to cups later
 - Increased dependence on the bottle for comfort
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When Should My Child Start?

6–9 Months

- ✓ Introduce an open cup with small amounts of water during meals.
- ✓ Begin practicing with a straw cup.

Remember: Practice—not perfection—is the goal.



9–12 Months

Offer a cup at every meal.

Allow your child to practice:

- Holding the cup
- Bringing it to their mouth
- Taking small sips

Expect spills—they're part of learning!

12–18 Months

Most children can transition completely from bottles during this stage.

By 18 months, bottles should generally be discontinued unless your pediatrician recommends otherwise.

Which Cup Should I Choose?

Great Options

- ✓ Small open cup
 - Best for oral motor development
 - Encourages mature drinking skills
 - Promotes lip closure and tongue control
 - ✓ Straw cup
 - Excellent for oral motor skill development
 - Encourages appropriate tongue movement
 - Easier for many children than open cups
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Use With Caution

⚠ Spill-proof "sippy" cups

These may be convenient, but prolonged use can limit opportunities to develop mature drinking skills.

If you use one, think of it as a temporary step—not a long-term solution.

8 Tips for a Smooth Transition

1. Start Early

Introduce cups while your child still enjoys learning new skills.

2. Offer the Cup During Meals

Meals provide natural opportunities for practice.

3. Keep Bottles Out of Sight

Children often ask for what they can see.

4. Replace One Bottle at a Time

Start with the easiest bottle to eliminate (often midday).

Gradually work toward removing:

- Morning bottle
 - Naptime bottle
 - Bedtime bottle (usually the hardest)
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5. Expect Some Resistance

Change takes time.

Stay calm, consistent, and encouraging.

6. Praise Every Attempt

Celebrate trying—not just success.

Examples:

"I love how you took a sip!"

"Great job using your cup!"

7. Avoid Using the Bottle for Comfort

Instead, offer:

- Hugs
 - Reading together
 - Rocking
 - Singing
 - Favorite blanket or stuffed animal
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8. Be Patient

Some children transition in a few days.

Others need several weeks.

Consistency is more important than speed.



Common Questions

What if my child refuses the cup?

Keep offering it without pressure.

Sometimes children need many opportunities before accepting something new.

Should I stop bottles all at once?

Most children do best with a gradual transition, although some families prefer to stop all bottles at once.

Choose the approach that works best for your family and remain consistent.

Can my child still have milk?

Absolutely!

Milk can be offered in:

- Open cups
- Straw cups

Water should be available throughout the day.

When Should I Seek Help?

Talk with your pediatrician or a feeding specialist if your child:

- Refuses all cups after several weeks of practice.
- Coughs, chokes, or gags when drinking.
- Has difficulty coordinating sucking or swallowing.
- Drinks only from a bottle.
- Has poor weight gain or dehydration concerns.
- Has significant stress or anxiety around drinking.
- Has medical or developmental conditions affecting feeding.



Remember

- ♥ Every child learns at their own pace.
- ♥ Focus on progress, not perfection.
- ♥ Keep mealtimes positive and pressure-free.
- ♥ Your encouragement helps build confidence.

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