

Nursing and Bottle Feeding: More than a Nutrition Concept

By

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Q. In today's day and age, is nursing still considered the best way to feed your baby?

A. The natural process of nursing was designed by Mother Nature. We should always try to follow her guidance. When we cannot, the bottle is a wonderful substitute.

CAUTION: Maintain the "substitute" quality of the bottle and "preserve" the nursing as much as possible.

Nursing Process

Nursing is a way of life—personalized, intimate, nurturing, bonding, and full of love. It is more than a nutrition system. To nurse, Mother Nature created the exact right formula for each individual baby. She made it available to mother and her baby in perfect portions at just the right time. She also set it up so that the baby is at exactly the right distance for seeing and communicating.

Going beyond nutritional and logistical values, she had another idea—bonding and attachment. She planned it so that the only way to nurse a baby was by holding him or her in a loving comfortable position. She even figured out that the special holding position was so secure for baby that each time he or she was in it there was growth in physical closeness and security. She knew that such intimate physical contact at this early age would lay the groundwork for later social ties to parents and family.

The Substitute

In the early 1900's there started to be different reasons why mothers could not nurse their babies—work, volunteer efforts, even wartime support. As time went on, with the industrial revolution, technological revolution, and many social and economic reforms, more and more women continued to have to be away from their babies for more reasons and for more time. How wonderful it was that man (or woman as the case may be) created the bottle. It was an excellent substitute. It could do “almost” everything nursing could do.

- Provide “almost” the exact right formula for each individual baby.
- Be available at “almost” all times, at “almost” a moments notice, and have the baby in exactly the right position for seeing and communicating.
- Have “almost” the right portion sizes.

Substitutes are never quite as good as the originals, but when they reach the “almost” quality in most areas, we consider them to be very good. So it is with the bottle. The bottle has another wonderful perk. It can be used to continue the important bonding, attachment, and security building process. The nurse or female family member who is supposed to take over the process can carry it out in the exact same position as the nursing mother.

Beware of the substitute

As time went on and the nurse or other designated female member of the family also could not be there consistently, bottle feeding fell into the hands of whoever was around to help with the task—old, young, female, male, family member or not. What happened to the bonding, attachment, and security that Mother Nature had intended? It stopped being done. With too many different bottle feeders, the relationship building process connected with nursing came to a sputtering halt.

These many different feeders who did not have the bonding process in mind had a totally different perspective—how to get the job done more easily and efficiently. And so the baby feeding process changed. Along with more and more detached feeders came more and more modifications to the once intimate bottle feeding process.

Today even Mom falls into some of these time-saving and convenience type habits. Let's look in on some of the thought processes that contribute to this situation.

- What if I feed my baby comfortably in my arms watch TV at the same time?
- What if I put my baby in an infant seat or stroller and feed him or her with one hand and talk on the phone with the other?
- What if the bottle can be placed in such a way that my baby can hold it himself or herself? Imagine all I can do then!

“Oh no!” you say. “Oh yes!” That is exactly what is happening. In some cases the last little bit of attachment to a human being has been dropped, and feeding baby has become a totally disconnected process-- physically and emotionally.

About Bottles

Bottles have plastic nipples. They were designed to take the place of real nipples. That means that the only liquid that should come through a plastic nipple is the same kind of liquid that can come through a real nipple— formula. All other liquids (and they should mostly be water) should be given through a cup.

When should you wean your baby from nursing or the bottle? More or less at around a year. It should coincide with the walking process. During weaning, water and the recommended form of milk can be offered from a cup. That is also the same time that soft pieces of fruit and other soft foods are recommended.

Sippie Cups

Beware of the substitute. Use a real cup with your toddler and preschooler as much as possible. Use that sippie cup only when you cannot be there to supervise the drinking process. Here is another helpful guideline. Try to limit snacks and meals for your young child to specific times and at tables and chairs... not in the stroller.

Did I say stroller? Oh no! A substitute for walking... beware!



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