

Feeding your Newborn Baby with Cleft Lip, with or without Cleft Palate



Most babies born with a cleft lip (with or without cleft palate) feed well with support. Maternity hospital staff, along with your specialist cleft nurse or speech and language therapist from the cleft team, will offer this support.

The aim is that you and your baby enjoy feeding and that your baby is gaining enough weight. Your Public Health Nurse will check your baby's weight once you are at home.

Cleft Lip Only

Babies with a cleft lip only can usually feed well by breast or ordinary bottle. Some may have difficulty completely closing their lips around the breast or bottle and you may need further advice. Please see our advice leaflet on breast feeding your baby with a cleft diagnosis.

Cleft Involving the Palate

When there's a cleft palate (gap in the roof of the mouth), advice and help will be given to you. Babies born with a cleft palate may have difficulty getting a strong suck on their mother's breast or on an ordinary baby bottle. This can cause your baby to get tired while feeding. Long feeding times use up more of your baby's energy which can affect their weight gain. Generally each feed should take no longer than 30 - 40 minutes. With support breast feeding may be possible; exclusive breastfeeding however can be difficult with some types of cleft. Expressed breast milk can be a good choice for your baby. With the right support, feeding should be an enjoyable time between parent and baby. See below for some helpful ideas:

What Can Help?

When breastfeeding, breast compression can increase the flow of milk to help your baby feed. Specialised bottles may also be needed. There are different types of bottle and teat depending on your baby's needs. The type of bottle offered can depend on the stock in your maternity unit, your cleft team's advice and on what works best for you and your baby. Every baby is unique; you and your baby are learning and you will need to allow yourself time to feel comfortable and relaxed with feeding. Some of the bottle types available are on the list attached. These can be used with expressed breast milk or infant formula. The cleft team can help you choose a bottle to suit your baby. You or your Public Health Nurse can contact the cleft team if you have any questions about feeding.

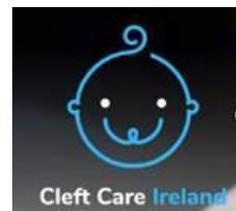
Common topics discussed with parents

- Positions for your baby during feeding
- Milk coming down the nose during feeds
- Wind, colic and reflux concerns
- Bottle and teat choices
- Babies requiring extra help by tube feeding
- Breast feeding support; assistance with milk production
- Expected weight gain
- Feeding times, volumes and durations
- Spoon feeding advice when 4-6 months

Further information is also available on the Irish and UK Cleft association websites:

www.cleftcareireland.ie

www.cleft.ie www.clapa.com



Feeding equipment

Breast pumps

Various brands are available to purchase or hire to support a mother's milk production when exclusive breast feeding is difficult.

If a mother needs to fully express all feeds then rental of a hospital grade double pump may be recommended e.g. Medela Symphony Breast Pump, Ardo Carum Breast Pump. Once home you can choose to continue renting or purchase a breast pump for ongoing expressing.

Remember to keep receipts for pump hire or purchase as they can be claimed with your tax returns at www.revenue.ie

Haberman Feeder

Readily available in most maternity hospitals. The long teat requires squeezing as the baby feeds.

There is a special valve mechanism inside the teat. The parent/caregiver delivers the milk into an infant's mouth by gently squeezing the teat during sucking.

Although relatively expensive it is successful with most babies.

Your health professional will show you how to put the bottle together and how to use it correctly.

Mam Soft Bottle

Available in some maternity hospitals. This is a simple, soft bottle that the parent or caregiver can gently squeeze as the baby sucks. Lower in cost than the Haberman feeder. Bottles & teats sold separately.

Requires instruction for use by a health professional.

The Mam vented newborn (size 1) teat is recommended for use with newborn babies. An all ages (size 2) teat is available for babies older than 3 months if needed.

Standard NUK latex (size 1) for narrow neck bottles also fit the Mam bottle (remove yellow collar and replace with the white collar of the Mam bottle).

Supplier details

Please discuss with your midwife or Lactation Consultant in your Maternity Hospital for their recommended products, suppliers and price list.

www.medicare.ie

For Medela pump

www.breastisbest.ie

For Ardi Carum Pump

www.inha.ie

For information on reduced hire breast pumps

General HSE breastfeeding advice available at:
www.2hse.ie/babies-and-toddlers/breastfeeding/



Medicare: (01) 2014900

Email: info@medicare.ie

www.medicare.ie

Most pharmacies can place an order for you. Can also be purchased on Amazon & EBay sites.

Information on:

<https://www.medela.com/breastfeeding-professionals/products/feeding/special-needs-feeder>



No Irish based supplier.

Order teats/bottles from UK online shop: www.clapa.com

NUK latex (size 1) teat supply from Maternity Unit or online:

<https://teat.shop/teat-latex-medium.html>

The Irish Cleft Association: www.cleft.ie can supply a starter pack (2 bottles/4 teats) if contacted



Feeding equipment

Dr. Brown's Specialty Feeding Bottle

This Dr Brown's bottle has a special blue valve that allows milk to be delivered to the baby when the baby presses on the teat with their tongue. This means that a strong suck is not necessary for baby to get the milk. The idea is that the baby can self-pace their feed (no squeezing is required by the parent or caregiver).

It can be used with a variety of teat sizes. Your nurse/cleft team should be able to advise which teat size is best for your baby. For new infants the preemie or size 1 teat is generally best, depending on your baby's ability to manage the flow of milk. **Requires instruction for use by a health professional.**

Important: this bottle is not to be confused with standard Dr Brown's bottle available nationwide. The bottle for cleft conditions has a special blue valve. However, this blue valve can be added to a standard Dr Brown's bottle to make it a specialized feeding bottle.

Other options

Some parents have reported success with cheaper soft bottles sourced from pharmacies, supermarkets or discount shops that, by the nature of their material, can be squeezed. Various shaped teats and spoons have been used by parents with limited success reported. Enlarging or cutting a hole in a teat is **not recommended** as it may be unsafe for feeding.

Supplier details

No Irish based supplier presently but may be available online at McCabe's Pharmacy in 2024 at www.mccabespharmacy.com .

Order from UK:
www.clapa.com

Information/order online:
<http://www.drbrownsbaby.com/medical/products/new-dr-browns-speciality-feeding-system>



Online product name: Dr. Brown's Zero-Resistance Specialty Feeding System or Dr. Brown's Specialty Feeding Bottle

Feeding advice and feeding assessments are available by contacting your local cleft team.

Further information on cleft:
www.cleftcareireland.ie
www.cleft.ie
www.clapa.com

It is important that if parents find a bottle that works for them and their baby, that they ensure replacement bottles can be sourced during the 1st year of life

Remember your cleft team are happy to help you and your baby with any feeding difficulties that come up. They can offer specialized advice and direct you to your local supports and care teams. For further information please contact your linked Cleft team at either CHI Temple Street or Crumlin locations.

Author: Jane Gunn, Version: 3

Contributors: Laura Duggan, Noirin Carroll, Celine Lenihan, Christina Cotter, Caroline Reddy, Orla Ford

Approval Date: October 2023, Review Date: October 2026

Copyright ©Dublin Cleft Centre Feeding Sub-Group