

Time for a Cup





Quick Tips!

I am learning a new skill when I drink from an open cup. Here is how to help me:

- Start by letting me play with an empty cup.
- Offer me small amounts of breastmilk, formula, or water in the open cup.
- Hold the open cup for me and let me learn to take small sips.
- Give me lots of praise and practice.
- Show me how you drink from an open cup.
- Give me an open cup most of the time when I am good at drinking from the cup. This could be around 12 to 14 months.



I will need to use an open cup.

Time for a cup

Months

Months

Months

Months

What age could I start using an open cup?

- Sometime between 6 and 9 months is a nice time to start learning to use an open cup.
- When I start solid foods, for example, I also can try an open cup.
- Be sure I can sit without support and curve my lips around the rim of the open cup.
- I want to be using an open cup most of the time by 12 to 14 months.





What drinks can you put in my open cup?

At around 6 months you can give me small amounts of:

- breastmilk
- formula
- water

Offer me an open cup at meal and snack times. I do not need juice or any other sweetened drinks.

Juice and sweetened drinks, like sports drinks and punch, have lots of sugar. These drinks can leave me too full to eat other healthier foods.

There are so many different cups. Which one is best for me?

Open cups do not have lids and offer me many benefits. Learning a new skill such as drinking from an open cup will take me some time. I will need to practice and I will make messes.

Drinking from an open cup:

- teaches me hand-eye coordination.
- builds muscles that will help me talk.
- promotes healthy mouth development.
- helps keep my teeth strong and free from decay.
- encourages my healthy weight gain.



Cups with straws are also an option for me.

After I learn to use an open cup, you can try giving me a cup with a straw. Many of these cups do have a lid and that is okay. Learning to drink from an open cup and from a cup with a straw are skills I will always use.



What about sippy cups and other training cups?

Many parents like these cups because they do not make as many messes. If you want to use a training cup, only give it to me for a short time, and only at meals. If I am already using a training cup, offer me an open cup.

Training cups do not offer me the benefits that open cups and cups with straws do. Open cups allow my lips to close around the edge and my tongue to

touch the roof of my mouth. I do not need a training cup to learn to drink from an open cup.

More about training cups:

- Carrying around a training cup with a hard spout can be dangerous because I could fall and hurt my mouth.
- Taking lots of sips throughout the day from a training cup can lead to tooth decay.
- Using training cups with a valve does not teach me how to sip. According to the American Dental Association these cups should be avoided.



How can I start to use an open cup instead of my bottle?

When I am good at drinking from an open cup, replace one bottle at a time. Pick a meal such as lunch and make a new routine. The new routine will teach me to expect an open cup, not my bottle. Make sure this new routine is very different from my old lunchtime bottle routine.

What is a routine?

A routine is an activity with a few simple steps that are done in the same order over and over.

Routines help me be calm and cooperative because I know what to expect. Routines work for many of my daily activities such as mealtime, snack time, diaper changes, and bedtime.



Making a new routine is easy!

Here is one example:

I usually have a bottle before I eat lunch. Today I will have a new routine. Make sure all my bottles are put away.

Read me a book or play a little before lunch. Start lunch by putting me in my highchair and showing me 2 open cups. Let me grab one. Fill with a little breastmilk or formula and give it to me with my lunch. After I eat, help me put the cup and dishes in the sink. Do the same thing every day. This is my new routine.

Why is it recommended that I use an open cup by 18 months?

Drinking mostly from only an open cup instead of a bottle helps me grow healthier. Some children who drink too many bottles past the age of 18 months can get:

Tooth decay

Milk, baby formula, juice, and sweet drinks all have some sugar. When drinking from a bottle all day or going to sleep with a bottle, this sugar can cause tooth decay. Tooth decay can be very painful. Baby teeth are important! They help children eat well and talk, and they help the second teeth come in straight.

Anemia

Children can get anemia which means they do not have enough iron in their blood. Milk, juice, and other drinks are low in iron. If children drink too much of these liquids, they do not have room for iron rich foods. These foods include meat, chicken, beans, and WIC cereals. Iron-rich foods help children grow. Anemia can make children feel tired, get sick easily, and have trouble learning.

Ear infections

If children drink from a bottle while lying down, they can get ear infections. The liquid from the bottle can go into their ears. This is how some ear infections begin.

How to say bye-bye to all my bottles?

- Start giving me an open cup when I am 6 to 9 months. As I get older it is harder for me to change my routines.
- Help me learn to use an open cup at mealtime or snack time.
- Make sure I am good at using an open cup before stopping my bottles.
- Use new routines so I expect an open cup not a bottle.
- Keep my bottles out of sight.
- Instead of a bottle between meals, give me a healthy snack and a cup with a little water, breastmilk, or formula. You can give me milk when I am over 1 year.
- Offer me a cup with water and a little snack before bed instead of a bottle. Brush my teeth after I eat.
- Celebrate bye-bye bottles with me and our family. Have a simple celebration and let me know how proud you are.



**California Department of Public Health,
California WIC Program**

*This institution is an equal opportunity
provider.*

1-800-852-5770 | MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov

09/25

