Bottle to Breast: Gentle Steps

A family guide from Bloom Therapy Group

If your baby takes a bottle easily but fusses, pops off or gets frustrated at the breast, you are not alone, and you have not done anything wrong. Babies learn from what they practice. A bottle gives fast, predictable milk, so it feels like an instant reward. Breastfeeding asks for a different skill, and that skill can be learned.

Why it happens

- **Familiar flow.** Babies get used to how fast milk comes and how a feed feels and tastes.
- **Instant reward.** At the breast, milk may take a moment to start flowing. Some babies lose patience before it does.
- **Stress on both sides.** When feeds feel hard, babies and parents both tense up, which makes the next feed harder.

What can help

1. **Make the breast a calm, happy place.** Spend time skin to skin and cuddling with no pressure to feed.
2. **Offer when baby is calm and a little drowsy,** not frantic with hunger. A calm baby learns best.
3. **Slow the bottle down.** A slower-flow nipple and paced bottle feeding make the bottle and breast feel more alike.
4. **Ask about an instant reward at the latch.** Your feeding provider may show you how to give a little milk right as baby latches. Please try this only with guidance.
5. **Aim for one better feed a day.** Small wins add up. You do not need a perfect day.
6. **Protect your supply.** Keep removing milk as often as your provider recommends while baby is learning.

> **Try this tonight**
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> Spend 15 minutes skin to skin with your baby with no goal at all. No latching attempts, no counting. Just let the breast be a comfortable place to be.

When to reach out

Contact your feeding provider or pediatrician if you notice:

- Pain that lasts through feeds or keeps coming back
- Gulping, coughing, choking or noisy breathing during feeds
- Feeds that take a long time for a small amount of milk
- Slow weight gain, or a baby who always seems hungry
- Frustration that is wearing you down

> **Is it too late?**
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> Breastfeeding goals do not have a single deadline. Babies of every age can make progress, and each baby's temperament shapes what works. Our team will meet you where you are and follow your goals for feeding your baby.

This handout is for general education and does not replace care from your own medical and lactation providers.

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