

Why is Bottle Propping Prohibited?

When feeding an infant a bottle, it is important that a caregiver does so in a safe and caring way. When life feels busy and many things demand your attention, it can feel tempting to prop a baby's bottle instead of holding them in your arms. While propping a bottle may free you up to do other things, it can lead to unhealthy and potentially dangerous circumstances for the infant.

What is bottle propping?

Bottle propping is when an infant's bottle is propped up by an item, such as a pillow, a blanket or stack of books in order to feed a child hands-free. Bottle propping is done instead of holding the infant in your arms and feeding them the bottle. Per OCC rules, **Bottles shall never be propped. The child or a caregiver shall hold the bottle.**

Why is bottle propping unsafe for an infant?

Choking

The propping of a bottle can lead to an infant choking, partially because an adult is not watching them closely. When the bottle is propped, liquid continues to come out of the bottle, even if the infant is full or has fallen asleep. This can also lead to overfeeding of the infant. In addition, instead of swallowing the liquid, the infant can breathe it in (aspirate).

Tooth Decay & Cavities

When a bottle is propped, liquids can pool in the back of the infant's mouth. When liquids that contain sugar are left in the baby's mouth for a long period of time, cavities can occur. These sugars include those found in formula and breastmilk.

Ear Infections

Infants who are fed a propped bottle while lying down run the risk of getting an ear infection. As they drink, the liquid pools at the back of the mouth and can enter the ears through the Eustachian tubes, which can result in infection. Frequent ear infections can lead to hearing loss, which can make it difficult for children to communicate.

Missed Opportunity for Bonding with Infant

Feeding a bottle to an infant offers both infant and caregiver the opportunity to develop and nurture a special bond, giving the infant individualized attention and care.

How can I make sure I am feeding an infant a bottle safely?

- Hold the baby in a semi-upright position in your arms. The baby should be able to look at you during this time.
- Make eye contact with the infant and talk softly or sing songs. Make the experience as enjoyable as possible for the baby. Use this time to get to know each other.
- Burp the infant during a natural break in the feeding or when the infant is finished. Do so by holding them in an upright position and gently patting or rubbing the back. This can slow the feeding and can minimize the amount of air swallowed.
- Per OCC rules, children of any age shall not be laid down with a bottle.



Sources:

- <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/ORALHEALTH/Documents/ECCPBrochure.pdf>
- <https://intermountainhealthcare.org/ext/Dcmnt?ncid=520407540>
- https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/wicworks/Topics/FG/Chapter4_InfantFormulaFeeding.pdf