

# CWRU researchers offer tips for picking the right baby bottle

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Many moms who start off breastfeeding ponder bottle issues, as they have to return to work or need to spend several hours away from the baby.

Breastfeeding expert Donna Dowling, associate professor of nursing at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University, could sympathize with the new mom next to her in a large baby store as she was also overwhelmed by the variety of bottle choices in the 12 x 8 foot display.

The expectant mom's questions inspired Dowling to explore the research evidence behind the claims of manufacturers for their baby products.

Dowling said the bottles came in a variety of sizes and shapes. All are designed to mimic breastfeeding, according to Dowling and Laura Tycon, a nursing student at the university, from bottles shaped and pliable like a mother's breast to complicated feeding systems designed to prevent the baby's intake of excess air. In their research, it became evident that the designs of the bottles were based on research done during the 1960's and 70's that demonstrated differences in how infants obtain milk during breastfeeding and bottle feeding.

After reviewing research papers provided by the manufacturers about their baby products, Dowling and Tycon came up with some tips and report them in the *Nursing for Women's Health* article, "Bottle/Nipple Systems, Helping Parents Make Informed Choices."

The final choice eventually comes down to the mother's and baby's preference.

"Babies are different and have different styles of sucking, from the slow to the fast eaters," Dowling said.

The researchers offer this advice:

- The bottle and nipple need to fit the baby's eating style. [Baby bottles](#) come with nipples that have slow, medium or fast flows of milk. The slower milk flows are for the younger babies who are encountering their first learning experience--feeding. Some babies are very flexible and will take any nipple if they are hungry while others prefer to stay with what is familiar.
- Consider advertising claims that bottles/nipples prevent colic or were clinically tested objectively. Seek out the research studies to see if the claims matched the findings and who funded the study.
- Realize that no one product is best. All products are generally good in that they have bottle/nipple systems that have been based on reducing the intake of excessive air that could be uncomfortable for the baby and result in regurgitation or reflux.
- Give baby a chance to adapt to a new bottle. Don't give up if the baby rejects the bottle on the first feeding. Too many changes of bottle and nipple systems can result in frustration for the mother and baby and be costly.
- Seek advice from friends, other mothers, or parenting websites for information about bottles. Also beware of costs when purchasing and changing from one system to another.

Dowling also cautions about the complicated bottle and nipple systems: "The more parts and tiny areas in the components, the harder it will be to clean."

She generally suggests the simpler systems. When choosing the different flow rates, first try a slow or medium flow and stay with that if the baby is comfortable.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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