

The amount of milk that your baby needs drastically decreases after 6 months of age to an average of 600 - 800ml per day. Solid food intake needs to increase to be the main fuel source at the age of 9 months.

Most babies are ready to start drinking from a **sippy cup** at the age of 9 months and this is also the best time to start and wean babies from the bottle. At 9 months your child needs 3 meals a day of solid foods to ensure good health; too much milk might hinder this. Sippy cups come in all forms and sizes. Some with straws, some with plastic tips, some with soft tips. I suggest looking for a sippy cup with a soft tip and remove the spill-proof valve at first to make it easier for him/her to learn to suck from it.

Tips:

Start with a slow approach, replacing one regular bottle with a sippy cup feed. Choose the feeding times when your child is less likely to be hungry, for instance mid-morning. Do this gradually with the other bottle times until you're bottle-free.

You can also make the bottle less appealing. **Gradually water the milk down**, adding less scoops of powder to the amount of water. With time your child will eat better because he/she is hungry at meal times and solid foods can take its rightful place.

Encourage the concept of **drinking only when seated**. Bottle and later sippy cup. Children will soon choose to rather go play with toys than sit in one place with their bottle/cup.

Remember that your child might associate her bottle with something that comforts her. Give your child enough attention and cuddles during this time. It is not a bad idea to maybe **introduce a new teddy or soft toy to help with comforting**.

**Keep the bottle out of sight.**

Taking the bottle away at bedtime, and during the night, might be the most difficult. Replace the bottle with a sippy cup but sit with your child and cuddle them. Bed time bottles are more for soothing than for hunger. Put them to bed with lots of hugs and kisses and give them their favorite teddy bear to hold.

With breastfeeding, you can also replace one feed with a sippy cup. Another way is to shorten your feeding time. Keep shortening the specific feeding time until it has been eliminated. Remember that your baby still needs the skin-to-skin contact for cuddling. **Ask your spouse** to give the sippy cup so that the "bottle" (breast) is not in plain sight. He can also take them to bed at night when you want to eliminate the night time feed.

Remember that nothing will happen overnight. Be patient and consistent.

*This information piece has been written by Riekie Van der Vyfer, a registered dietician based at Quenet's Family Pharmacy in Worcester. For appointments, she can be contacted on 082 922 4169.*