

BONDING WHEN BOTTLE FEEDING



Bonding – the emotional connection between you and your baby

Love, closeness, warmth and a little “magic” – those are the ingredients for bonding, the emotional attachment between you and your baby. Even the first skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth is particularly beneficial for parent-child bonding. This intimate and meaningful contact can aid breastfeeding through the release of breastfeeding hormones and helps you to strengthen “maternal feelings” right from the start. But bonding also means learning to understand your baby’s needs and being able to respond appropriately to body language, facial expressions and sounds. This is the way you convey emotions that make your child feel secure and trust you.

Bonding when bottle feeding – it works!

For there to be this great closeness between you and your baby while you are bottle feeding, you should keep a few things in mind. When bottle feeding, give your baby your full attention by holding your little one close to your body while keeping eye contact. Try also to have skin-to-skin contact with your baby as often as possible to deepen the bond between you, even while feeding. This way you can recognise the signals for when your baby has had enough and react to them straightaway – an important aspect for further strengthening the parent-child bond.

Interpreting your baby’s signals correctly – feeding on demand

Every child needs to develop its own rhythm of being hungry and full. It is important that you feed your baby regularly, but do not overfeed. You can help your baby by feeding on demand, paying attention to possible signals for being hungry or full. Recognising and following these signals will help your baby to consume just the right amount of milk and prevent excessive weight gain. From the beginning, most babies are able to signal when they are hungry and do this by, for example:

- Moving their eyes while sleeping.
- Making searching and sucking movements, such as sucking their finger or a comfort blanket.
- Becoming restless with increased leg and arm movements.
- Moving their hands to their mouths more often.
- Adopting a tense posture, clenching their fists or frowning.
- Making soft sounds and sighs.

The sooner you recognise your baby’s hunger signals, the better. If your baby starts crying, this is a very late hunger signal that can lead to your baby drinking too quickly, which can cause air to be swallowed. But, not all signals automatically mean that your baby is hungry. Your baby also signals being full: for example, through longer pauses when sucking, a relaxed posture or falling asleep.

Over time, you will learn to understand your baby’s signals and interpret them correctly, which also further strengthens the emotional parent-child bond.

This is how to find the right feeding position:

- Hold your baby in a slightly upright position so that your baby’s head is in the crook of your elbow and you can make eye contact.
- Make sure you hold the teat at an angle so that it is always filled with milk, which helps prevent your baby from swallowing too much air.
- Give your baby some time to burp both during feeding and afterwards, so that any air that may have been swallowed with the milk can come up.
- Just like breastfeeding, switch sides and feed your baby alternately on your right or left arm.



Tip:

To ensure that bottle feeding does not result in too little physical contact, do not feed your baby in the baby bouncer or the car seat – there should always be time for a little closeness.