

Using a Feeding Tube Device: Why Bother?

A feeding tube can make nursing satisfying. Because your baby now gets all the food he wants through nursing, he is more likely to nurse contentedly. Breastfeeding can be especially frustrating for the baby who gets plenty of milk from the bottle and never enough from the breast. He may have decided breastfeeding isn't worth the effort, or he may have begun using the breast mostly for dozing. The feeding tube can change all that from its very first use.

A feeding tube may encourage better suckling. When a baby has access to a full supply of milk, he uses a steady suck-swallow rhythm. That steady rhythm teaches him what nursing should be like, and draws your breast farther into his mouth, so that he may actually "milk" your breast better.

All of your baby's suckling stimulates your breasts to make more milk. Your breasts make more milk only when more milk is taken from them. The time your baby spends with a bottle doesn't help to increase your supply. And if he then nurses at your breast without a strong, drawing suckle, his time at the breast isn't as productive for your milk supply, either.

A feeding tube saves time. Instead of nursing, then bottle-feeding, your baby is completely fed while he nurses. It usually shortens the time needed to return to unsupplemented nursing, too.

Your baby has the pleasure of leaving your breast with a full tummy - a pleasure for both of you.

You may worry less about your supply. Since you know that your baby is getting a good meal every time he nurses, you may relax more about the whole situation.

The feeding tube was designed to maintain breastfeeding. Bottles were designed to replace it. Each gadget tends to work the way it was designed to work.

Every gadget has drawbacks. A feeding tube at breast may not be right for you. But it has been used successfully by thousands of mothers. So allow for a few days of practice with it. If you need to, use it only at those times when both you and your baby are feeling patient, until you feel more comfortable with it. Remember that it's not a complicated device and it has no moving parts; any problems are likely to have simple solutions. Call for help. And remember that a little practice can make a lot of difference.