

Drinking Cups Advice



5 Things Parents Should Know About Starting and Stopping Sippy Cups in Children



Adapted from an article by Maryann Tomovich Jacobsen, MS, RD on June 15, 2011

1. Start them early: Babies usually start solids by the time they're 6 months. This is also the time to introduce water and (diluted) juice. It's a good idea to get a few starter sippy cups, with handles, lids and a hard spout, to get your child used to the idea that liquids (including milk) can come in something other than a bottle or breast.

While babies will have fun throwing these cups for a while, by 9 months many will start drinking from it. The recommendation is for children to stop the bottle and drink from sippy cups by one year of age.

2. Use sippy cups wisely: Once your child is using a sippy cup you need to use them wisely. Avoid using sippy cups as a pacifier or allowing children to sip on them throughout the day unless its filled with water. Spout sippy cups filled with milk, juice or juice drinks, allow sugar (even natural sources) to stay in the mouth longer and increase the risk of tooth decay. This may be why cavities have increased in children 2-5 years old.



3. Drop the spout cups ASAP: Traditional sippy cups are only supposed to be used as a short transition to real cups. Overuse of sippy cups can cause more than dental caries, they can also contribute to speech difficulties.



Because children suck on sippy cups the way they do bottles, if used too long, it can change the position of the tongue and teeth, potentially causing lisps and articulation problems. The traditional sippy should only be used for about a month. Using cups with a straw are much better for speech development and dental health.



Best Practice: switch to a straw cup as soon as you can.



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Best Practice: switch to a straw cup as soon as you can.



4. Encourage children to drink from regular cups: We recommend to teach children to start drinking from regular cups between 12 and 15 months. Once children master this, you might want to use regular cups at meals and straw cups for water on the go.

Another drawback to young children sucking for too long is something called Oral Myofunctional Disorder (OMD). The symptoms include one of the following:

1. *abnormal thumb, finger, lip, and tongue sucking habits*
2. *an inappropriate mouth-open lips-open resting posture problem*
3. *a forward interdental rest posture of the tongue problem*
4. *a forward rest position of the tongue against the maxillary incisors problem*
5. *a lateral, posterior interdental tongue rest posture problem*
6. *inappropriate thrusting of the tongue in speaking and/or swallowing.*

These abnormal habit patterns, functional activities, and postures can open the dental bite beyond the normal rest position. This can result in a disruption of dental development in children and over-eruption of selected teeth in adults.

A prime example of an OMD, familiar to all pediatricians and dentists, is a retained sucking habit or use of a sippy cup. While it is tempting to ignore such habits since some children do outgrow them, many children do not spontaneously discontinue bad habits and will need help in eliminating the habits.

5. Part with sippy cups between 2 and 3 years: Children are developmentally ready to give up sippy cups by 2 to 3 years of age. Will it hurt to use them to prevent spills once in a while? Probably not. If your child uses an open cup and some sippy cups with straws it is probably okay but at nursery we will accept straw cups only for regular use and we use open cups at snack and lunchtimes.

But just like we introduce textures with our babies and let toddlers use utensils, we have to do the same with drinking. It's an important and overlooked part of development.

Anyone having trouble getting your child to give up the sippy cup habit? Speak to us.

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