

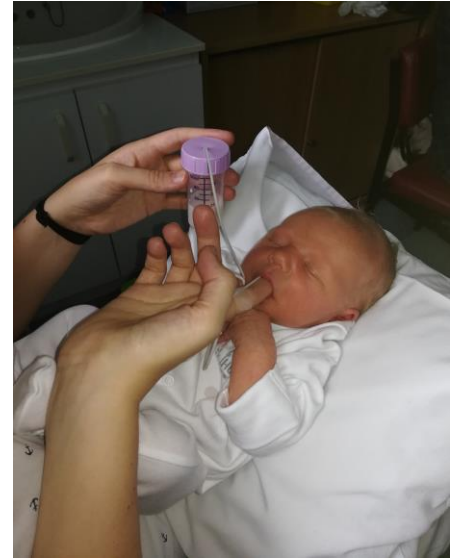
# GUIDE TO FINGER FEEDING

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## Why choose to finger feed?

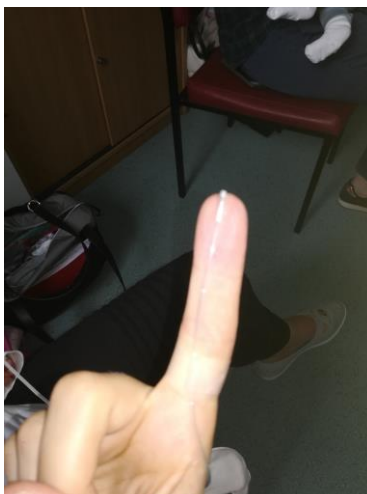
Finger feeding is an alternative method to feed a baby, that simulates breastfeeding better than an artificial teat.

Breastfeeding & Finger feeding	Bottle feeding (artificial teat)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Active tongue &amp; jaw movement</li><li>○ Strength &amp; effort needed</li><li>○ Baby controls milk flow</li><li>○ <i>Finger feed only: mum can control milk flow</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Minimal tongue &amp; jaw movement</li><li>○ Minimal effort needed</li><li>○ Teat controls milk flow</li></ul>



## Good indicators to choose to finger feed are:

- if your aim is to breastfeed your baby
- if mum or baby are temporarily unable to breastfeed
- if breastfeeds need to be supplemented
- if you are weaning a child towards breastfeeding
- if there are difficulties with latch, suck, weight gain or milk intake at the breast
- post-frenulotomy (tongue-tie release) to reduce wound adhesion



## How to Finger Feed

You will need: a thin feeding tube (size 5 or 6 Fr), or a supplemental nursing system, a container, finger feeding bottle or syringe; tape (optional); expressed breast milk/formula

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
2. Place one end of the tube on the soft part of your index or middle finger.
3. Remove the cap with scissors and place this end into the milk.
4. Touch your finger above your baby's upper lip to encourage them to actively take your finger into their mouth to simulate breastfeeding.
5. Place the soft part of your finger and the tube against the palate. The baby's tongue will cup the bottom of your finger when sucking. Note: There are three holes in this end of the tube. The baby's mouth should cover all three holes. If it doesn't, cut the tube to the first hole.
6. To help you keep the tube in place throughout the feed, you can tape it to your finger at the second knuckle.
7. Watch the baby's face for any strain, discomfort, gagging, milk pooling in the bottom of the mouth or spilling out. You may have to adjust the flow of the milk or cut the tube.

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## Pacing the Feed

The flow of milk when breastfeeding is slower than with alternative methods. To guide your baby towards breastfeeding, or if you notice discomfort, you can adjust how freely the milk flows. If the container is lifted above the baby's mouth, the milk will flow faster. Lower the container to slow the flow.

You can also actively pace the feed by intermittently lifting the tube out of the milk for about 10 seconds, allowing your baby to get used to a varying flow of milk. Your baby will then continue sucking your finger and the tube until the milk reaches their mouth – like a straw.

## Finger Feeding after Frenulotomy (Tongue-Tie Release)

Post-frenulotomy wound care is essential to allow the wound to heal without reforming the previous tie. This consists of the caregiver massaging the area 2x/day, tongue mobilisation exercises as well as active tongue movement throughout the day which can mainly be achieved during breastfeeding or finger feeding. In comparison, feeding with an artificial teat requires only minimal tongue movement to feed efficiently and can therefore contribute to the tie reforming.

For tongue mobilisation, you can get your baby to suck on your finger between feeds. To practice side to side movement, sweep your finger across the baby's lower gum. Your baby's tongue should follow your finger.

## Cleaning of Equipment

Please take care to clean and sterilise the equipment, especially the tube effectively. Rinse all parts with warm soapy water after each use. Flush the tube with a syringe and repeat with clean water. Then sterilise with steam or sterilising liquid.

## For further Reading

If you need any further information, please see below or ask your Lactation Consultant.

Fisher, K. (2018, February 10). *Katherine Fisher paced finger feeding*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPwKAoaf9w>.

Pearson-Glaze, P. (2018, October 8). *Breastfeeding Support: What is Finger Feeding?* Retrieved from <https://breastfeeding.support/what-is-finger-feeding/>.

Torrance, H. (2014, November). *Oxford University Hospitals: NHS Trust A Guide to Finger Feeding*. Retrieved from <https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/files/11016Pfingfeeding.pdf>

