

The following information is to help you understand a different position to feed your baby.

What is side lying position?

This position is a special way to hold your baby when you feed them. It means that:

- Your baby's head is raised higher than their hips, and
- They are lying on their side.

Why feed your baby in a side lying position?

The side lying position may help your baby feed more easily and safely. Feeding your baby this way:

- makes it easier to coordinate suck-swallow-breathe skills.
- requires less effort to breathe and suck.
- makes it easier to keep the baby's head and body in line with each other.
- there is less chance of choking or fluid going into the lungs because the liquid flow is not affected by gravity.
- helps keep their heart rate and oxygen level more stable.



How to feed your baby side lying:

- Swaddle your baby. Swaddling helps your baby feel secure and calm.
- You should sit in a comfortable chair.
- Place a pillow across your lap and lay the baby on it.
- Support your baby's back and head then turn the baby on their side.
- Be sure your baby's shoulders are aligned, one over the other.
- Raise their head.
- Be sure their head and hips are in a line with each other.
- Feet are tucked in, beside or against your body.
- Begin to bottle feed your baby, make sure you can see your baby's face to watch for signs that your baby is swallowing the milk well.
- Prop your feet on a footrest or stool. This may help make this position easier to do.

Feeding Your Baby in a Side Lying Position

Is your baby ready to try another feeding position?

After a few weeks of feeding your baby in a side lying position, your baby may be ready to try feeding in the more traditional cradle position. Ask your pediatrician, nurse or occupational therapist (OT) when your baby may be ready.



For a cradle position:

- Hold your baby cradled in your arm with their back against your arm.
- Hold them fairly upright.

Signs your baby may be ready to try a new position:

- If your baby is sucking regularly without taking long breath breaks.
- If your baby is able to keep his/her arms and legs slightly tucked in close to their body during a feed.

Signs your baby may have trouble feeding in a cradle position:

- Your baby is gulping milk.
- Your baby spills milk down their chin/face while feeding.
- Your baby is working harder to breathe.

If your baby has trouble feeding in a cradle position, return to a feeding your baby in a side lying position for another week before trying the cradle position again.

Where can I get more help?

Your baby's healthcare team can help you and your baby get into the side lying position. Your healthcare team may also be able to suggest other positions to help your baby eat. Please let your healthcare team know if you have any questions specific care of your baby.

Ask your healthcare provider for a referral to the HPHA **Transitional Outpatient Pediatric Physiotherapy/Occupational Therapy Clinic** for additional support. **PT** ext 2908 **OT** ext 2631

References:

Adapted from Alberta Health Services (2020) "Benefits of Feeding in a Side Lying Position."

Adapted from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (2022) "Bottle feeding - elevated sidelying position."

Pados BF, Park J, Thoyre SM, Estrem H, Nix WB. Milk flow rates from bottle nipples used after hospital discharge. MCN Am J Matern Child Nurs. 2016; 41 (4): 237 - 243

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Developed by the
Maternal Child
Program