

Paced Bottle Feeding

USING EXTERNAL PACING TO IMPROVE SUCK-SWALLOW-BREATHE COORDINATION

Some babies will have long sucking bursts during feeding without taking a break to breathe at appropriate times which can lead to coughing, choking, and stress. Use of external pacing can help to teach the baby an appropriate and coordinated suck-swallow-breathe pattern during feedings. This technique is described below:

- Count the number of suck/swallows and remove the nipple from the baby's mouth after 3-5 sucks. This pause should be only 1-2 seconds, then replace the nipple to encourage your baby to continue sucking.
- Be proactive with pacing; try to avoid any signs of stress (eye widening, finger splaying, coughing/choking) by providing a break after only 3 sucks if needed.
- Provide external pacing for the first minute or two of the feeding. Over time, you may "test" to see if the baby is able to pace on her own by allowing more than 5 sucks and watching for spontaneous breathing. You may notice that your baby can begin pacing on his/her own for part of the feeding, but may need support again at the end of the feeding when fatigue sets in.

*The goal is not only to **teach the baby** an appropriate suck-swallow-breathe pattern but to also ensure that all feeding experiences are **positive and safe.***