

# SIPPY CUPS



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommend weaning children from a bottle to a cup by their first birthday. Caregivers should offer children fluids from a cup as soon as they are developmentally ready. Sippy cups are sometimes used as a transition to regular, open cups, although they should only be used for a very short period of time.

## **In general, if sippy cups are used, use them:**

- To give milk at mealtimes (including breast milk) as they transition to an open cup
- To give water, between meals, when they are thirsty, as they transition to an open cup
- To give fruit juice to an infant 6 months or older, as they transition to an open cup, although there is no formal recommendation that children actually need juice.

Since the goal should be to transition the child from a bottle to an open cup, caregivers should begin to use a regular, open cup when the child's fine motor skills allow them to hold it. Use a few ounces of water in a small cup (filled halfway or less) that they can easily get their little hands around and lift to their mouth. Let them practice while being supervised. Be patient and expect some spills.

## **Misusing sippy cups:**

While sippy cups are convenient and minimize spills, the problem with them is that they often end up simply taking the place of a bottle and are used for extended periods of time.

Misusing sippy cups can contribute to cavities, especially if the child is allowed to carry around juice or sugar-sweetened drinks throughout the day. Even milk, which is normally a very healthy drink, contributes to cavities if the child drinks milk after he brushes his teeth at night, or goes to bed with a cup.

They can also contribute to poor eating habits if the child frequently gulps down whatever is in the sippy cup, making the child full and taking the place of food at meals or simply adding on extra calories. Walking around all day with a sippy cup can also contribute to an unhealthy habit of mindless eating and drinking later in life.

## **Other ways to misuse sippy cups:**

- Giving children a sippy cup of juice or milk while they are riding in a car or in the middle of the night
- Not cleaning all parts of the cup between uses, including inside the lid and under the valve

Reference: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs*. 3rd edition.

