Finger Feeding

Why would a baby need to finger feed?

- Nipple confusion
- Suckling disorder
- Weak seal
- Clenching and biting
- Premature
Finger Feeding

• If a baby has **nipple confusion** (from getting bottles early in life) finger feeding will teach the baby the sensation and taste of skin so they can wean off the sensation of plastic.

• If a baby has a **suckling disorder** (unable to coordinate suck, swallow, breath), finger feeding allows the child to still get the nutrients the baby needs while building the muscles the baby needs to breastfeed.
Finger Feeding

• If the baby has a **seal weakness** (slipping off the breast). While there are other exercises the baby will need to do to strengthen the seal, finger feeding will keep the babies mouth in the proper position while strengthening the seal.

• Sometimes babies are **high tone** and will bite the breast rather than suckle, or babies born in the posterior position will often clench due to TMJ of the jaw.
Finger Feeding

- **Premature** babies often need to finger feed due to weakness, their small size, and often nipple confusion from receiving bottles in the hospital.
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOTTLE FEEDING AND BREASTFEEDING

When a baby bottle feeds there are many differences:

**BOTTLE FEEDING**

1. Gravity will help the milk flow freely without effort from the baby.
2. Babies just need to bite the tip of the bottle nipple.
3. Babies will just use the front of the babies mouth.
4. The babies tongue curves like a C, rather than flat.
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOTTLE FEEDING AND BREASTFEEDING

1. Gravity does not help during breastfeeding, the baby needs to move the tongue in a peristaltic movement to release the milk from the breast.
2. If a baby bites the breast, milk will not come out.
3. Babies actually **throat feed** not mouth feed. The breast needs to be pulled deep into the throat, way back between the hard and soft palate of the mouth (which is very far back).
4. The babies tongue needs to be flat like a piece of wood as opposed to curved like a C.
How to Finger Feed:

1. I use a very inexpensive glass eye and ear dropper. (It is cheap and easy to clean).

2. I set up a little station for the mom. It consists of a tissue box, coffee mug, disposable cup and glass dropper.
How to Finger Feed:

3. Mother inserts finger into baby’s mouth.
   *finger nail towards tongue

4. Make sure the lips are open around the finger.
How to Finger Feed:

5. The baby is placed to the **right of the mother** (to the left if the mother is left handed), on a pillow. The pillow is on a slight angle so the babies head is slightly elevated.

6. The mother places her **right pointer finger** (left finger for lefties), into the babies mouth with the finger nail facing the tongue.
7. The baby will take the mother (or father's) finger almost to the second joint of the finger. If the finger is not deeply enough in the baby's mouth, the baby will bite as opposed to suckle with his tongue.

8. The mother places the dropper into the baby's mouth right next to the finger that is inserted into the baby's mouth. (You can also use an SNS (supplemental nursing system), or tube taped to your finger but a dropper is inexpensive and easy for new parents).

9. The baby should not feel the dropper, so the dropper needs to be placed into the mouth just inside the lip.
10. The baby should just feel the finger and think that milk is coming out of the finger and not the dropper. The parent should drop the milk consistently in a steady flow and not take the dropper in and out of the babies mouth. Only take the dropper out to refill the dropper with the milk.

11. If a baby has a suckling disorder the parent should squeeze the dropper when the baby makes a suckling motion.

12. If the baby has simple nipple confusion the parent could squeeze the dropper quickly because the point of the finger feeding is to get the child used to taking skin again.
Finger feeding should be monitored by a qualified practitioner.

- The goal is to use finger feeding as a transitional tool to ultimately train a baby to be able to breastfeed properly.
- Baby needs to be weighed weekly to ensure proper weight gain.
- For further assistance contact sarachana.com, or a board certified lactation consultant.