

Feeding in elevated side- lying (ESL)

A guide for parents



Why

ESL is a very supportive position for feeding some babies

Equipment

You need:

- A bottle with your baby's usual teat
- milk
- footstool
- pillow or cushion



How

- Sit with your feet on the footstool – your knees should be higher than your hips
- Place the pillow across your lap
- Place your baby on their side with their bottom against your tummy. Their legs will be out in front of them
- Check their back is in line with their head and their cheek is on the pillow
- Place the palm of your hand on the baby's back
- Offer your baby the bottle from the side
- If this position is not comfortable (e.g., you've had a Caesarean section), you can change it by moving your baby to one side of your lap, as long as they remain well-supported



Benefits

- Safe and comfortable position for your baby, which helps to keep their breathing stable during a feed
- Good position for stable feeding
- Helps your baby to co-ordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing
- Helps your baby to manage milk flow from the bottle

Making ANY changes to this position makes your baby work harder and reduces their concentration on their feeding:

Change	Effect
No pillow and/or footstool	Feeding position is less stable
Carer's lap isn't even	Difficult for baby to bring their arms into middle of body or up to face
Baby's head isn't higher than their hips	More difficulties managing milk = risk of it going down the wrong way
Baby isn't fully resting on the pillow	Less support to maintain a good body position Restricts your baby's ability to pace themselves
Your hand is over your baby's head	Restricts your baby's ability to pull back off the bottle, which means they could choke

There is lots of information and many videos about ESL on the internet. Please be aware that many of these use an incorrect hand position, where the feeder's hand is around the baby's neck or over their head.

Should you have any queries, please contact the neonatal Speech & Language Therapy Team via the Dyson Centre for Neonatal Care (01225 824438 or 01225 824833).

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.



Date of publication: February 2024 | Ref: RUH NIC/034
© Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust