

Children's Speech and Language Therapy

Cup drinking advice

Introducing a Cup

Most children can be given a cup to practise drinking:

- When they are able to sit upright.
- When they begin to wean to solid foods.
- If there is no concern about their swallowing.

Moving onto a cup helps to keep your child's teeth healthy. It also helps them to develop their jaw and tongue movements.

You can offer your child a 'sippy cup' with a spout from about 6 months. From 6-12 months, you can help your child to practise drinking from an open cup. They will be messy with an open cup when little, but it helps them to practise the skill.

Tips to Help your Child with Cup Drinking

- Have a cup of water on your child's tray at each mealtime. They will try to use it the more they see it.
- Do not fill the cup too full – your child can hold it more easily.
- Put a mat under your child's high chair. Getting messy is part of learning a new skill.
- Model cup drinking. Children learn by watching others.

Tips for Using a 'Sippy' or Spouted Cup

- Use the cup drinking tips above.
- Try a free flow 'sippy' cup first. Encourage your child to take little sips rather than big gulps.
- Keep your child's teeth healthy by offering water from a sippy cup.

Tips for Using an Open Cup

- Make sure your child is sat upright and well supported when drinking from an open cup.
- Try an open cup with a slope. You do not have to tip the cup as far. This makes practising easier.
- Sit next to your child. Keep your hand at bottom of the cup to hold it steady and keep the flow of the water slow.



- Encourage your child to hold the cup with 2 hands.
- Your child might try to keep the cup steady by putting their tongue under it or biting it. Try to touch the tip of the cup to your child's bottom lip to help them keep it steady

When Should My Child be Able to Use a Straw?

Children learn to use a straw after they use a cup. Make sure you introduce a cup first. Children should be able to chew their food before they use a straw. Keep practising little and often with your child after they have learnt to chew.

What if My Child Coughs?

When learning to use a cup, all children will sometimes cough when drinking. If your child coughs a lot, they may not be ready to use a cup yet. Speak to your Health Visitor if you are not sure.

What if My Child has Problems Eating and Drinking?

If your child has had problems with their swallow, contact your Speech and Language Therapist or a medical professional before trying liquid from a cup. They can let you know if your child can manage a cup safely.