

Moving on to...open cups

Speech and language therapists, dietitians and dentists recommend that children should start using open cups (a cup without a lid) from around six months (when weaning, or when able to sit up unsupported).

Children who use open cups:

- learn how to sip properly
- develop strong mouth muscles necessary for learning to talk
- have healthier teeth and oral health

Tips for moving on to open cups...

For children under 2

Choose the right cup to move on to.

- Ideally choose an open cup, or a lidded cup without a valve. Two-handed or sloping cups can make it easy for little hands to hold and drink from
- Avoid lidded cups with valves as they need to be bitten and sucked hard, and are no different to bottles. These cups are usually described as non-spill. If you aren't sure then hold a cup upside down; if no liquid comes out then the cup has a valve

Spills happen! All children experiment by tipping out their drink a few times, no matter how old they are when they start using open cups, so be prepared.

- Put a small amount of liquid in the cup – there will be less to spill, and a more manageable amount of liquid for them to drink
- Keep a jug handy for topping up (probably some clean, dry clothes as well for a short while)

- Calmly clean up spills and your child will soon realise that they don't get a big reaction
- Keep a cloth handy so you're ready to deal with any spills

For children over 2

- Talk to your child about moving on to open cups
- Make it special, go cup shopping and buy one they like. You could buy stickers to decorate it
- Be prepared for spills even with older children
- Show them how brilliant they are. Have some motivating rewards handy – some children love stickers; others may prefer a trip to the park or a small toy. Start by rewarding after one day, then after three, then after five and again after another five

