



Speech and language therapy

Straw drinking in children who have Down's syndrome

Date: 30 April 2020

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The below suggestions outline some of the best methods of drinking for our children.

Firstly, **NO to sippy cups!**

Cups with a protruding spout are not a good choice for children who have Down's syndrome. There are three main reasons why we do not recommend sippy cups:

1. The child may bite on the spout, which causes atypical swallowing patterns and may lead to tongue protrusion (the tongue poking out of the mouth).
2. The child may put their tongue underneath the spout, which leads to an immature 'suckling' pattern and may lead to tongue protrusion.
3. Sippy cups cause poor dental hygiene and tooth decay. The Journal of Dentistry for Children reports that almost two-thirds of young children with tooth decay used sippy cups.

So, what type of cup is best for a child who has Down's syndrome?

A straw cup such as the 'Honey Bear' is a great option!

The honey bear is a bear shaped bottle, made of soft plastic, with a flexible straw and a spill-proof lid. You can teach your child to drink through a straw, by gently squeezing the bear's body.

Straw drinking has many advantages for children who have Down's syndrome. It can help your child to develop some of the precise oral movements needed for clear speech, such as lip rounding, cheek tone/tension, tongue retraction.



Straw drinking can also help your child to develop a more mature drinking pattern, with less drooling/dribbling.

There is some evidence that straw drinking is associated with a lower incidence of otitis media (glue ear) and a lower incidence of upper respiratory tract infections.

Important! Make sure that your child always uses his/her lips during straw drinking.

The child's lips should be closed around the straw, with no more than 1/2 inch of straw in the mouth. There should be no bite marks on the straw, and your child's tongue should NEVER be placed under the straw!

You can buy Honey Bear cups here:

<http://www.eg-training.co.uk/index.php?page=detail&product=1020008&category=Eating%20Drinking>

You could also use a Munchkin Straw Trainer Cup, such as this:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Munchkin-Click-Weighted-Trainer-Orange/dp/B0159BRA8E?ref=s9_apbd_otopr_hd_bw_b44YR5&pf_rd_r=6NCZRQFPH94NMSDZVZRW&pf_rd_p=ee3e6724-84be-5653-af58-58d40fc9d84c&pf_rd_s=merchandised-search-10&pf_rd_t=BROWSE&pf_rd_i=60191031

An easily available ready-made drink with a straw is the 'Innocent Smoothie' for kids. You may need to change the straw to one with a slightly larger diameter if your child finds it difficult to close his/her lips around the straw.

<https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/things-we-make/kids/kids-smoothies>

If you would like to discuss your child's individual needs, please email: training@downs-syndrome.org.uk