



# Ensuring a Proper Latch

## The Rooting Reflex

The rooting reflex is the reflex that all babies possess that helps them find the nipple. If you place the nipple on the lower lip of the baby, they will open their mouth wide. It is important to then place the entire nipple into the mouth so that their lips are close to the base of the bottle. Make sure their lips are flanged out. This will help ensure a proper latch so they aren't then going home and latching improperly on mom's breast. If babies begin to latch improperly on mom's breast, it can cause a great deal of pain for mom. *Remember, duck lips are better than no lips!*

## The Sucking Reflex

When sucking from the breast, baby's mouth must encompass the entire areola of the breast and the nipple will be sucked to the back of the mouth where it presses on the baby's soft palette activating the suck reflex.

**Run your tongue along the roof of your mouth, you should feel ridges at the front of your mouth which becomes smooth as you move your tongue back. The ridges are your hard palate and the smooth part is your soft palate. That's where the nipple needs to reach to create a proper latch.**

## Tongue Thrust

Baby then presses on the nipple with their tongue, otherwise known as tongue thrust. If baby latches on to just mom's nipple as they might do with a bottle not only will milk not flow efficiently, mom's nipple will get quite sore as breastfeeding babies tend to suck very hard. Making sure baby is latching the same way on a bottle that they should latch onto mom will help with this problem.

