



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Giving up the bottle

Children who are reliant on bottle feeding after the age of 12 months are at risk of health problems including iron deficiency, tooth decay and middle ear infections according to a new public health campaign launched today at the Bankstown Community Health Centre.

*Giving up the Bottle*, a program aimed at convincing parents that certain feeding practices have a use-by date, is an initiative of the South Western and Central Sydney area health services and the Centre for Family Health and Midwifery at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Director of the UTS Centre for Family Health and Midwifery, Professor Lesley Barclay, said overuse of baby bottles was a widespread practice in Australia and research had shown it was a leading cause of iron deficiency.

Bankstown Health Service Community Nutritionist Lyn Stewart said iron deficiency in young children was not obvious and affected children may appear perfectly healthy.

"Children who drink cow's milk from bottles rather than cups after the age of 12 months tend to drink more milk than they need," she said.

Excess milk can displace other essential foods in kid's diets and while cow's milk has great nutritional benefits and is an important food for children, it contains very little iron.

"Overuse of bottles can also lead to tooth decay, particularly if the bottles contain sweet drinks and middle ear infections in young children have also been associated with drinking from bottles while lying down," she said.

Research in the Bankstown area found that three out of four children between one and two years old were still using feeding bottles.

*Giving up the Bottle* is directed at the general community as well as Vietnamese, Arabic and Chinese speaking communities who commonly have poor access to information in their own languages.

Project resources include pamphlets translated into key community languages, posters, and information packs for health professionals.

The project team has been working closely with general practitioners and child and family health nurses to develop a checklist and other resources that help them to identify feeding practices that place children at risk.

*Giving up the Bottle* has been assisted by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing through the Childhood Nutrition Program.

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