



Prop Baby Self-Feeding Products

OPSS Risk Summary

The Product

Prop baby self-feeding products are designed to enable newborn and young babies who cannot manage or self-regulate their own feed to be bottle fed with little or no assistance from a caregiver as they enable a feeding bottle to be propped and held in the baby's mouth. The products are typically designed with a padded structure that provides cushioning around the baby's head and chest. However, there are numerous variants that include U-shaped or cushioned pillows that hold the baby in place, frames that suspend the bottle above the baby, and decorative pillows that fasten around the neck with the bottle securely propped at the front. These designs all share the common feature of enabling bottle feeding with minimal or no caregiver involvement, this is contrary to NHS guidance. Some examples are shown below, these should be regarded as non-exhaustive.



Figure 1: Examples of prop baby self-feeding products.

Newborn and young babies are the intended user of the product. They do not have the dexterity or cognitive ability to manage their own feed, either in terms of

being able to control the flow of bottle feed. This will be determined in part by the angle of the bottle as fixed by the product. Newborn and young babies have to learn how to bottle feed, including when to suck, swallow and breath. They cannot take deliberate actions if they gag or choke on feed to rescue, other than natural reflexes. They do not have the ability to raise an alarm if something is going wrong and signals of distress may only be obvious through close supervision.

In relation to the cushioned products, it is also foreseeable that caregivers might leave a baby resting or to sleep while still attached to the product. This is contrary to NHS safe sleep advice.

The Hazard

There are several possible scenarios where baby prop self-feeding products can cause harms. These include;

- The product's design and functionality enable prop bottle feeding. This can cause a baby to asphyxiate resulting in fatal injuries, because its airway has been blocked by feed dispensed by the bottle that has been secured to the product.
- Asphyxiation from the baby rolling on its side or its front and covering its face in the material of the pillow.
- Additionally, there is a risk of aspiration pneumonia if feed enters the lungs during or after an episode of impaired swallowing or choking.

The Harm

OPSS is most concerned about hazards identified in prop baby feeders which relate to a fatal harm from asphyxiation. Asphyxiation occurs when the airway is blocked by feed, or from the baby's airways being covered by the pillow's material.

Asphyxiation caused by choking on feed

When feeding on a bottle, the baby releases feed by squeezing on the teat and so milk flow can be continual, rather than interrupted. However, prop bottles containing feed will drip the feed, even without the baby squeezing on the teat. Babies can choke on feed because more liquid is dispensed than a baby can swallow and they cannot push the bottle away. A baby has certain protective reflexes when choking, including spluttering; however, if liquid touches an infant's larynx, it can activate the laryngeal chemoreflex (LCR), a survival reflex. The LCR causes the baby to stop breathing (apnea) momentarily, close the airway (laryngospasm), and swallow or cough, all in an effort to keep the liquid out of the lungs. If milk/feed remains in the back of the throat, the baby can cease breathing until cleared.

Constant supervision is required when bottle feeding newborn and young babies who are unable to manage and self-regulate their own feed. Baby prop self-feeding products allow continuous feeding without breaks, facilitating a reduced or no supervision during a feed, and during that feed, for more liquid to flow than the baby can safely swallow.

Asphyxiation caused by the product covering baby's airway

Injuries can occur from leaving a baby in the product after feeding (such as a supervised feed) if it has settled or fallen asleep instead of risking disturbing the baby by removing it from the product. Babies are biologically programmed to fall asleep during a feed, which is mostly due to a hormone called cholecystokinin. The risk is increased if the newborn or young baby is left for long periods in the product. Babies' heads are disproportionately heavy, and they have underdeveloped neck muscles which limits their ability to reposition themselves. If they shift position, and in doing so, cover their face with the product's material they may be unable to move away from the obstruction, or before an intervention by a caregiver, leading to a fatal harm.

Other harms that can occur

As noted, other severe harms are also possible.

Aspiration pneumonia can occur when feed or other material enters the lungs via the respiratory tract instead of the stomach, often during or after an episode of impaired swallowing or choking.

OPSS is also concerned by the padded nature of the product that is positioned around baby's head and on its chest and the extent this can cause baby to overheat. Overheating is linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Risk Assessment

A detailed risk assessment has been carried out using the [PRISM methodology](#) by OPSS. PRISM is the OPSS Product Safety Risk Assessment methodology for GB market surveillance authorities and enforcing authorities in relation to the General Product Safety Regulations 2005, and products covered by Article 15 of Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 on the accreditation and market surveillance of non-food products, as it applies in GB.

Risk Level

The risk assessment relates to the avoidable death of a baby. The assessment determined that the hazard inherent in the product design that allows a baby to be fed with reduced, or no supervision represents a serious risk. The hazard from the soft, padded material that is intended to be position around the baby's head is assessed as a high risk. Based on these findings, the overall risk level for the product is classified as **serious**.

Conclusion

Newborn and young babies are extremely vulnerable due to their reduced hazard perception skills and inability to raise alarm or articulate the specific cause of their distress when they are being harmed. All of the prop baby self-feeding products that OPSS has considered, intended for newborn and very young babies who are unable to manage their own feed are dangerous due to their design and intended use. These products can never be made safe whilst maintaining their function, regardless of any changes to their appearance, or through the use of

warnings. The consequences of using self-feeding baby products can be fatal and the risk presented by these types of products cannot be considered tolerable.

Sources and Further Reading

For those seeking more information, below is a list of key sources related to baby self-feeding pillow hazards, expert opinions, and official guidance:

- **OPSS Product Safety Alert (UK, Nov 2022):** “*Product Safety Alert: Baby Self-Feeding Pillows/Prop Feeders (Alert Ref. PSA3)*” – Official government alert announcing the serious risk and required actions¹². ([GOV.UK](https://gov.uk))
- **OPSS News Story (UK, Oct 2025):** “*Warning of new variant of dangerous baby self-feeding products*” – Highlights the animal-shaped pillows and reiterates that all versions are unsafe³. ([GOV.UK News](https://gov.uk/news))
- **Child Accident Prevention Trust article (Dec 2022):** “*Urgent safety alert: baby self-feeding pillows can kill small babies*” – Expert commentary by CAPT with quotes from Professor Peter Fleming a consultant paediatrician and leading baby safety expert on choking and aspiration pneumonia⁴. (capt.org.uk)
- **Health Guidance – Bottle Feeding (NHS):** “*Bottle feeding advice*” – NHS public guidelines clearly stating never to leave a baby with a propped bottle (see section “Do not leave your baby alone”)⁵. ([NHS.uk](https://nhs.uk))
- **HealthforUnder5s – Dangers of Prop Feeding:** “*The dangers of prop feeding and bottle propping*” – A parent-facing educational piece listing all risks (choking, aspiration, suffocation, tooth decay, ear infections, bonding issues) in simple terms⁶. (healthforunder5s.co.uk)
- **EU Safety Gate Alert (Sep 2023):** *Alert A12/02242/23 (Ireland)* – Recall notice describing a baby self-feeding pillow and the choking risk, under EU product safety regulations⁷. ([European Commission Safety Gate](https://european-commission.eu/safety-gate))
- **ACCC Product Safety – Australian Government advise:** Providing caution of baby self-feeding products⁸. ([ACCC.gov](https://acc.gov.au))
- **Health Canada Recall and Safety Alert (Many 2025):** Health Canada warns that infant self-feeding devices sold on Amazon.ca pose choking and aspiration hazards⁹. ([Government of Canada](https://governmentofcanada.ca))
- **CPSC Recall Notice (USA, Sep 2021):** “*Boppy Company Recalls Newborn Loungers After 8 Infant Deaths*” – Although about a different product (lounger), it provides context on suffocation risk with infant pillows¹⁰. ([CPSC.gov](https://cpsc.gov))

¹ [Product Safety Alert: Baby Self-Feeding Pillows / Prop Feeders \(PSA3\) - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/product-safety-alerts/baby-self-feeding-pillows-prop-feeders-psa3)

² [Urgent Safety Alert issued for baby self-feeding pillows - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/urgent-safety-alert-issued-for-baby-self-feeding-pillows)

³ [Warning of new variant of dangerous baby self-feeding products - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/news/warning-of-new-variant-of-dangerous-baby-self-feeding-products)

⁴ [Urgent safety alert: Baby self-feeding pillows can kill small babies](https://capt.org.uk/urgent-safety-alert-baby-self-feeding-pillows-can-kill-small-babies)

⁵ [Bottle feeding advice - NHS](https://nhs.uk/healthguidance/bottle-feeding)

⁶ [The dangers of prop feeding and bottle propping - Health Under 5s](https://healthforunder5s.co.uk/the-dangers-of-prop-feeding-and-bottle-propping)

⁷ [Safety Gate: the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products](https://european-commission.eu/safety-gate/alert-a12-02242-23-ireland)

⁸ [Feed and soothe the baby safely | ACCC Product Safety](https://acc.gov.au/product-safety/feed-and-soothe-the-baby-safely)

⁹ [Health Canada warns that infant self-feeding devices sold on Amazon.ca pose choking and aspiration hazards - Canada.ca](https://governmentofcanada.ca/health-canada-warns-that-infant-self-feeding-devices-sold-on-amazon-ca-pose-choking-and-aspiration-hazards)

¹⁰ [The Boppy Company Recalls Over 3 Million Original Newborn Loungers, Boppy Preferred Newborn Loungers and Pottery Barn Kids Boppy Newborn Loungers After 8 Infant Deaths; Suffocation Risk | CPSC.gov](https://cpsc.gov/recall-notice-boppy-company-recalls-newborn-loungers-after-8-infant-deaths)

- **NCMD Announcement (Jun 2023):** “Self-feeding baby pillows unsafe” – Child mortality database urging spread of OPSS guidance¹¹. (*ncmd.info*)
- **Media Coverage (Oct 2025):** e.g. *Daily Mail Online* – “Urgent warning over popular baby feeding product... risk of serious harm or death”¹², and *National World* – “Parents warned to stop using self-feeding baby products over ‘death risk’”¹³

¹¹ [Self-feeding baby pillows unsafe](#)

¹² [Urgent warning over safety of popular baby feeding product: 'They pose risk of serious harm or death' | Daily Mail Online](#)

¹³ [Parents warning to stop using self-feeding baby products over 'death risk'](#)