

From the History and Archives Collection: Nursing Bottles

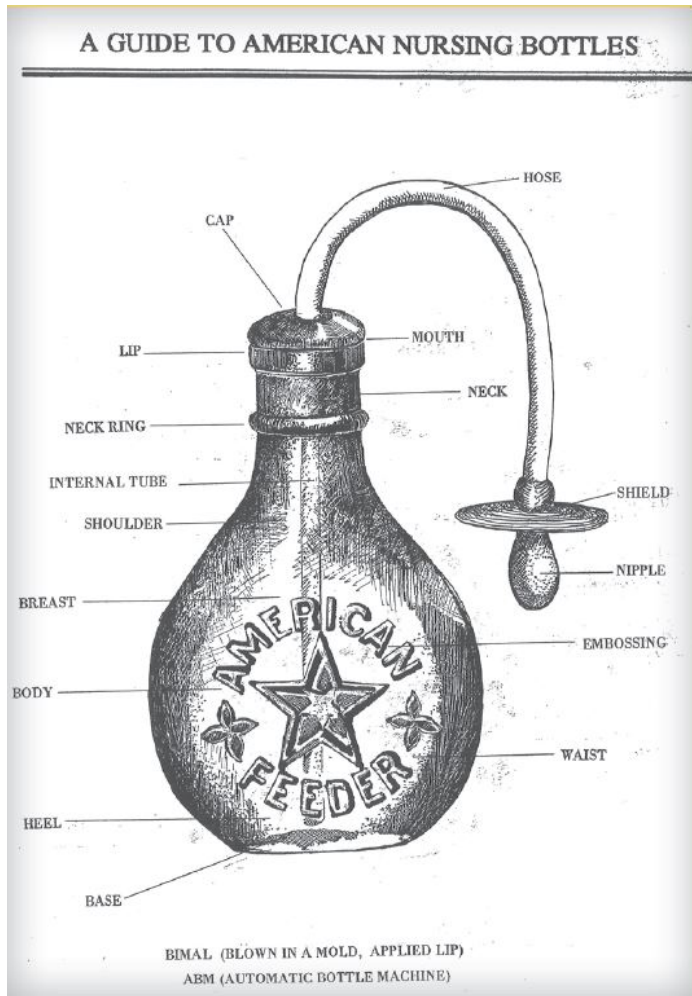
Timothy E. Gibbs, MPH

This month's selected image from The Delaware Academy of Medicine historical archives is of an American Feeder, a nursing bottle used circa 1878 (figure 1). The image is taken from Diane Ostrander's 1984 book, A Guide to American Nursing Bottles. Ostrander's book, of which there were only 200 copies printed, and is now a collector's item (figure 2).

Figure 1. Nursing Bottles from the Margaret Handy, MD Collection (donated by Katherine L. Esterly, MD)



Figure 2. A Guide to American Nursing Bottles, D. Ostrander



Notably, the book was the first of its kind to give terminology and proper organization to nursing bottles. Infant feeding has undergone historical evolutions from wet feeding, to nursing bottles, to formula. In fact, containers used in infant nursing are amongst some of the oldest vessels in history, with their use predating 1600 BC.

Throughout history, these bottles have changed considerably. Some of the earliest, ancient vessels were created from natural containers, such as gourds or animal horns, while later, make-shift containers included household items, such as soda bottles.

Although nursing bottles have varied in shape and style throughout history, their purpose has remained consistent- to ensure infants are receiving proper nutrition in order to start a healthy life. Food and nutrition are important throughout all stages in life, but critical for newborns as their bodies go through rapid growth and development. A proper nutritional foundation beginning during childhood, can translate into an improved health status during adult life.

Copyright (c) 2016 Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.