EDUCATE YOURSELF
Knowledge is power. The more you can learn about your baby’s CHD and any feeding and developmental issues that might come with it, the better prepared you will be and the more confident you will feel when making feeding decisions.

FIND A QUIET PLACE
Find a quiet, peaceful place, if possible, to feed your baby. Often this is almost impossible in the hospital with all the noise and light, but some hospitals now have quiet times. This is a perfect time to feed your baby. At home, try to find a place to make feeding more enjoyable for the person feeding the baby and for the baby too. This can help set a positive tone for feeding. Feeding is a time to be with your baby, and it is important to make it as pleasant as possible.

MANAGE STRESS
Take care of yourself and find ways to manage stress. Feeding itself can sometimes be stressful, so if you find ways to manage stress at other times, feeding will go better. If you can, try to get enough sleep and eat well. Take walks and exercise. This may seem impossible, but even if you can find small ways to manage stress and calm yourself, you will feel better overall.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCT
If you feel like something isn’t right with your baby, talk to your baby’s healthcare team right away. Worst-case scenario, nothing is wrong, but it’s far better to be wrong than to be right and not tell anyone.

SEEK SUPPORT
Feeding a baby with CHD can be very emotional, and parents can feel scared and overwhelmed. Get a support system. Family and friends can be helpful. There are any support groups of parents who have been through similar experiences and can provide support from someone who has been there.

BE HAPPY WITH PROGRESS!
Don’t measure success as a comparison with other babies your child’s age. It’s easy to get caught up in a tangle of what your child “should be able to do”. Don’t dwell on this!! Focus on how your baby is improving and the positive aspects you have been able to achieve with your child’s care. This is what is most important.

Finally, if you feel frustrated, overwhelmed or are unable to feed your baby, call your child’s doctor so he or she can help you find support. Sometimes, babies will need additional help feeding at a feeding clinic or with other specialists and getting that help as early as possible is important.