

Is My Breastfeeding Baby Getting Enough to Eat?



Often, a new parent's biggest concern is about how much or how often the baby breastfeeds. Here are some guidelines to help you know if your baby is getting enough:

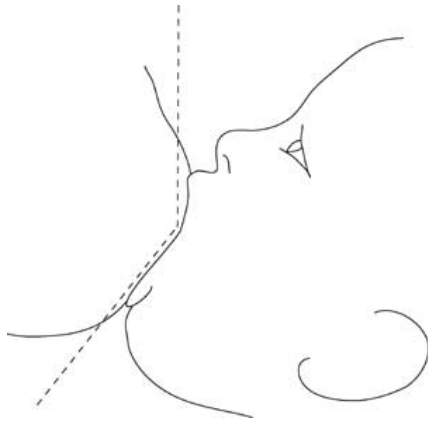
- Your newborn baby should nurse 8 - 12 times or more in 24 hours during the first 2 - 3 weeks. As your baby gets older he will become more efficient and feedings may be less frequent.
- Some feedings may be close together, even an hour or so apart. Other feedings will be less frequent. Feedings do not need to be evenly spaced and are often irregular in the newborn baby. Wake your baby if he doesn't awaken to feed within 3 hours during the day. Night time feedings can be less frequent.
- Count the number of wet diapers your baby has. Typical patterns for wet diapers are :
 - ≥ 1 wet diaper on day one
 - ≥ 2 wet diapers on day two
 - ≥ 3 wet diapers on day three
 - ≥ 4 wet diapers on day four
 - ≥ 5 wet diapers on day five
 - 6 - 8 wet diapers on day six and from then on
- Your baby should also have several stools per day. Stools change from meconium (tarry, sticky, black) to brownish to yellow over the first few days of life. Older babies may void and stool less. However, the urine should always be a light yellow color and the stool should be soft.
- Babies generally lose a little weight in the first few days after birth and then begin to gain. This is a normal pattern. Have your baby's weight checked a couple of times during the first 2 weeks, especially if you are concerned that your baby is not eating enough. A check of his weight is the only sure way to determine adequate intake. Once your baby has regained his birth weight you can relax and let your baby set the pace for the feedings.

Signs of hunger

- Rooting
- Mouthing movements
- Tense appearance
- Grunting, other sounds
- Hand-to-mouth activity
- Kicking, waving arms
- Crying

Signs of a good latch-on

- Relatively comfortable, latch-on pain subsides quickly
- Lips at the breast at $\geq 140^\circ$ angle (picture next p.)
- All or most of the areola in the baby's mouth with more areola covered from the area near his chin
- Lips flanged (rolled out)



Picture: mouth open to 140°

Signs that the Baby is full

- Drowsiness, sleepiness
- Baby comes off the breast spontaneously
- Relaxed appearance
- Hands and shoulders are relaxed
- Sleeps a period of time before arousing to feed again

Signs of a Good Feeding

- Easy latch-on, stays latched-on
- Hearing swallowing
- Noticing that the breasts are softer after feedings
- Feeling strong, deep, "pulling" sucking
- Seeing milk in your baby's mouth
- Leaking from the other breast or feeling of a "let-down" reflex
- 15 - 20 minutes vigorous sucking on each breast or 20 - 30 minutes on one side

Sometimes, babies seem to take a good feeding at the breast but wake within a few minutes wanting more. Offer the breast again. It will likely be a short "top off" feeding and your baby will drop off to sleep.

You need to see your physician or a Lactation Consultant if:

- Your baby has not begun to gain weight by his fifth day after birth or has not regained his birth weight by 2 weeks
- Your baby loses more than 7-10% of his birth weight in the first few days after birth
- Your baby is not voiding at least 6 - 8 times per day
- Your baby is not having several (2 - 5) stools per day. (After the first 5 - 6 weeks bowel movements can be less frequent)

These signs can indicate inadequate feedings and can become a serious concern if not corrected quickly. You may wish to keep a written record of when your baby voids, stools and feeds for a few days so you can accurately report this to your health care provider (See our "Feeding Log"). Please seek help if your problem does not resolve quickly.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.

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