



# BREASTFEEDING

## HOW TO KNOW YOUR EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFED BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH

### Resource Guide

**Disclaimer:**  
We try to be inclusive of all people in our materials. It is our goal to use gender inclusive language when possible. Please know that all references to breastfeeding are meant to be inclusive of all breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and human milk feeding individuals.



# Understanding Hunger and Fullness Cues, Baby's Growth, and Diaper Output

Throughout this guide, we will discuss how to tell your baby is getting enough nutrition. Although breastfeeding parents cannot see how much milk their baby is getting from the breast, there are other ways to know your baby is getting enough milk. Recognizing and responding to your baby's hunger and fullness cues, monitoring their wet and poop diapers, and monitoring their weight changes, can help.

## Hunger & Fullness Cues

Babies show different signs, we refer to these as cues when they are trying to communicate what they need. Newborn babies are still learning to control their bodies and sometimes their cues take time to understand. Watching your baby will help you learn what they are telling you. Over time, they will get better at giving cues, and you will get better at understanding them. When your baby is hungry, they will show hunger cues. The first cues are called early hunger cues. Babies may be calmer at this time making it easier to latch them.

### Early Hunger Cues



Rooting (turning head and opening mouth)



Hands in or near the mouth



Squirming or fidgeting

Puckered lips



Clenched fists held close to their body



Opening the mouth and sticking out the tongue



Smacking or licking their lips



## Late Hunger Cues

If their early hunger cues are missed, babies may begin showing late hunger cues



Agitated movements, including frantically turning head



Crying



Fussing



Breathing hard

Babies will fuss and cry as a late sign of hunger. When a baby shows late hunger cues, it can be harder for them to focus on latching. Positioning and offering your breast to your baby at the earliest signs of hunger can make breastfeeding easier. If you missed the early cues, that is ok! You can still successfully latch and feed your baby, but you may need to calm them first.

### **Skin-to-skin is a great way to reset and help calm you and your baby.**

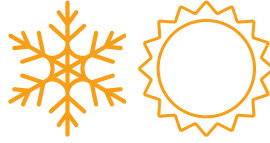
To do this, put your baby on your bare chest between your breasts. Once your baby is calm, try positioning and latching them to feed. Other ways to help calm your baby would be speaking or singing softly, gently rocking, swaying, or bouncing your baby, and gently massaging their back, arms, and legs. Calming your baby may take a few minutes of the same action before trying a different action if your baby continues to cry or becomes more upset.

It is important to note that babies cry for many reasons and hunger is just one of them.

## Babies cry to communicate their needs



Diaper change



Too cold or hot



Overwhelmed



Tired



Hungry



Uncomfortable

Your baby will let you know when they are done eating. How long your baby wants or needs to feed can change from feeding to feeding. Watching your baby for signs they are full is a better indicator than watching the clock. Your baby will let you know when they are done eating.

## Feeding Cues

How do I know if my baby is hungry?

**I'm Hungry!**

Licking lips, smacking/sucking sounds, opening mouth, sticking tongue out

Sucking on anything nearby

Rooting  
(turning head & opening mouth)

**I'm Really Hungry!**

Hand to mouth

Fidgeting, squirming, breathing fast, positioning for nursing

Fussing

**Calm me, then Feed me!**

Frantic, agitated movements

Crying, turning red

## Fullness Cues



Sucks slower or stops sucking



Relaxes hands and arms



Falling asleep  
at the breast



Turns away from the nipple



Pushes away

## Is my Baby Getting Enough Milk?

Babies grow a lot in the first year of life. Babies usually triple their body weight by the time they are 12 months old. At the beginning of the breastfeeding journey, both the parent and the baby are learning new skills that do not always come easily at first. When parents question if their baby is getting enough, they may begin offering formula because they misunderstand normal newborn behaviors to mean their baby is not getting enough. Babies have small stomachs which is why they eat more often. Babies breastfeed 8-12 times in 24 hours and are not on a fixed schedule, meaning they feed at different times during the day and the days may not look the same, especially during rapid growth. Every baby is different, and the timing of their feeding can vary. It is important to watch your baby's cues and not the clock. A sleepy baby may not show that they are hungry. During the first 6 weeks of life. You will want to wake your baby for feeding if it has been four hours since they last ate.



### Here are some ways you can tell your baby is getting enough:

You may hear or see your baby suckling and swallowing while breastfeeding. Your breasts feel softer after feeding your baby

#### Your baby is:



- ▶ Active, alert, and satisfied after feedings
- ▶ May fall asleep towards the end of the feeding and is satisfied
- ▶ Breastfeeding at least 8 times in 24 hours
- ▶ Having an appropriate number of wet and dirty diapers based on their age
- ▶ Gaining weight based on baby's age



## Normal weight gain for breastfed babies



Baby's Age	Weight Changes
1-3 Days	Up to 7% weight loss is normal
3-5 Days	Weight loss stops, small weight gain start
5-14 Days	Gaining 0.5-1oz per day <b>*Baby is back to birth weight by 14 days old</b>
1-4 Months	Gaining 4-8oz per week
4 Months-6 Months	Gaining 4-5oz per week
6 Months-12 Months	Gaining 2-4oz per week
12 Months and older	Gaining about 2oz per week

**Note:** If your baby's weight gain is not as expected, this could be a sign of an issue. Reach out to your local WIC office, a lactation consultant, or your healthcare provider for breastfeeding support.

## Diaper Output (Wet and Poopy Diapers)

An exclusively breastfed baby's poop will look different than a formula fed baby's or an adult. It is normal for babies to strain or bear down during a bowel movement since it is a new skill for them. Babies only start having bowel movements after they are born.

### What does an exclusively breastfed baby's poop look like?



A breastfed baby's poops are usually soft or runny, bright yellow/gold, and may have small white curds in them

Diarrhea looks different and will look like a large watery circle on the diaper with little fibrous or stringy mucus

Constipation is rare and looks like hard, pellet-like or small circular stools. If you notice your baby is constipated, you can gently massage their stomach in circular motions, offer tummy time, or move their legs like they are riding a bicycle to help ease their discomfort



# Breastfeeding Baby's Diaper Guide



Baby's Age	Wet Diapers in 24 hours	Soiled (Poop) Diapers in 24 hours
Day 1	1, pale color	At least 1, black, tarry/sticky
Day 2	2-3, pale color	At least 2, green/black
Day 3-4	3-4, pale color	At least 3, green/yellow, soft
Day 4	4-6, pale color	At least 3, yellow/seedy, soft/liquidly
Day 5 to 6 weeks	6+, pale color	At least 4, yellow/seedy, soft
6 weeks-6 months	6+, pale color	Frequency of stooling may slow down to 1 every day or every few days, yellow/seedy, soft
6 months and older	6+, pale color	Frequency, smell, texture, and color of stool may change with introduction of solids

\*Only count poops that are larger than a quarter. If your baby's diaper output is not as expected, this could be a sign of an issue. Reach out to your local WIC office, a lactation consultant, or your healthcare provider for breastfeeding support.

## Cluster Feeding and Growth Spurts

Cluster feeding is when babies feed multiple times in a short period. In the early weeks of life, it is normal for babies to cluster feed. When this occurs, parents may worry they are not making enough milk to satisfy their baby and often begin supplementing with formula unnecessarily. Over time, babies will take in more milk per feed as their stomachs and skills grow, and they also go longer between feeds. Cluster feeding may occur when they go through a growth spurt or the need for milk increases. During a growth spurt, your baby grows faster than usual and may suddenly eat more often. Lots of growth happens in short quick bursts that can happen any time but usually happens at 3, 6, and 8 weeks and again at 3 months and 6 months. Growth spurts only last 2 to 3 days and is nature's way of increasing your milk supply to continue to make milk for future feeds.



Understanding your baby's cues for hunger and fullness, their growth, and monitoring their diaper output, can help you feel confident that your baby is getting enough to eat. The frequency or number of times you are breastfeeding, the baby's weight gain, and their diaper output can provide helpful clues about their nutrition. Being aware of what to expect in the early stages of parenthood and breastfeeding, helps you feel prepared to provide the best care for your baby's nutrition needs.



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