

Is My Breast-fed Baby Getting Enough to Eat?

The number one breast-feeding question is: “Is my baby getting enough to eat?” It is easy to tell if a bottle-fed baby is eating enough because you can see what the baby is taking. This is not as easy with the breast-fed baby. Instead, the nursing mother has to follow the signs her baby and her body give her. Listed below are some signs that your baby is eating enough.

Signs that breast-feeding is going well for baby:

1. FEEDING:

- Usually, a newborn baby will eat at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours during the first 4 to 6 weeks of life. Most babies need at least one nighttime feeding the first 6 to 8 weeks of life. Allow your baby to eat when he wants to, for as long as he wants to eat. As your baby gets older, his suck becomes more efficient and he may nurse shorter time periods and less often, yet take in more milk.
- You can hear, see and feel frequent swallows, small at first, then larger, gulping swallows. Watch or lightly touch your baby’s throat, or feel the swallows with your hand on his back.
- Once your baby has enough milk, he will let go of your breast and his fists will be relaxed.

- Between feedings your baby should sleep or seem satisfied most of the time.
- Your baby may feed every 2 or 3 hours, or “cluster feed.” In this case, your baby may eat very often (even every hour) for several feedings in a row and then sleep for 4 to 5 hours.

2. ELIMINATION:

- Usually a newborn baby will have at least 1 wet cloth diaper and 1 stool each day for the first 2 days. Then there will be a slow increase in wet diapers, so that by 7 days of age he will have 6 wet cloth diapers and 1 stool every 24 hours. Some babies will have a stool each time they eat, and this too is normal.
- If you are using disposable diapers, it may be hard to tell if your baby has a wet diaper. Try going by the weight of the diaper when checking to see if your baby has a wet diaper. A disposable diaper that feels only a little heavier than when it was first put on may be equal to one wet cloth diaper. A much heavier diaper may mean

your baby has had a wet diaper equal to 2 or 3 wet cloth diapers.

- A wet disposable or cloth diaper should be a light yellow color.
- Usually the newborn's stools or "messy" diapers will appear dark green-black. As the mother's milk begins to come in, it changes to a yellow-brown seedy stool, and then to a yellow or mustard-colored, loose stool.

3. WEIGHT:

- When you see your baby's doctor at 2 to 3 weeks, your baby should be back up to birth weight. Remember, all babies lose weight the first few days of life and begin to gain their weight back slowly once your milk begins to come in.
- Babies have growth spurts at about 7 to 10 days, 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months. They may want to nurse more frequently at these times. Don't mistake this as a sign that you don't have enough milk.

Maternal signs that breast-feeding is going well:

- Your breasts may feel full before nursing if you are nursing every 2 to 3 hours. They may not feel full if you are nursing every hour. Your breasts should feel softer after nursing.
- During the first week after delivery, you may feel cramping of your uterus or notice heavier, bright red vaginal bleeding after breast feeding.
- You may feel thirsty while nursing.
- You will often feel sleepy or relaxed during and after nursing.
- You may notice a tingling, tightening or stretching feeling in your breasts while breast feeding or notice leaking of milk from the other breast while nursing on one side. This is called "let-down."



If you have any questions,
call your doctor
or your baby's doctor.