

Provider Information

BF – Breastfeeding

BF-HC HUNGER CUES

OUTCOME: The parents/family will understand early and late hunger cues and the benefit of responding to early hunger cues.

STANDARDS:

1. Explain early hunger cues, e.g., low intensity cry, small body movements, smacking, rooting.
2. Explain late hunger cues, e.g., high intensity cry, large body movements, arched back, and distressed behavior.
3. Explain that feedings are usually more effectively accomplished at the stage when early hunger cues are being expressed

Highlights of Hunger Cues:

- Understand that no restrictions should be placed on the frequency or length of feeding; the baby will let the mom know when hungry
- Understand that newborns usually feed a minimum of eight times in 24 hours
- Help the mother to recognize cues that infants use to signal readiness to begin and end feeding
- Criteria to assess if the baby is getting enough breast milk
- Understand that physical contact and nourishment are both important.

The importance and duration of Breastfeeding:

Skin to skin contact between mother and baby should begin immediately after the baby is born. Breastfeeding should begin within 1 hour of birth. Breastfeeding mothers should expect to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of their baby's life and to understand that breastfeeding continues to remain important after 6 months of age when other foods are given to the baby. Nutritionally breast milk is best and the skin-to-skin contact is important to the baby and the mother's wellbeing. To ensure that the baby has enough milk for every situation that might arise, the mother should be encouraged to collect and store breast milk – in addition to the milk provided to the baby when the mother breastfeeds. When emergencies or situations arise in which the mother cannot breastfeed, this stored breast milk will be given to the baby in a bottle.

How often should the mother breastfeed?

Early and often! Mothers should begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth. Then breastfeed at least 8 to 12 times every 24 hours to make plenty of milk for your baby. This means that in the first few days after birth, the newborn baby will breastfeed about every hour or two in the daytime and a couple of times at night. Healthy babies develop their own feeding schedules. Follow your baby's cues for when he or she is ready to

eat. No restrictions should be placed on the frequency or length of feeding; the baby will let the mom know when hungry,

How long should feedings be?

Feedings may be 15 to 20 minutes or longer per breast. But there is no set time. Your baby will let you know when he or she is finished. If you are worried that your baby is not eating enough, talk to your baby's doctor.

Learn your baby's hunger signs.

- When babies are hungry, they become more alert and active.
- They may put their hands or fists to their mouths, make sucking motions with their mouth, or turn their heads looking for the breast.
- If anything touches the baby's cheek – such as a hand – the baby may turn toward the hand, ready to eat.
- This sign of hunger is called rooting. Offer your breast when your baby shows rooting signs.
- Crying can be a late sign of hunger, and it may be harder to latch once the baby is upset.
- Over time, you will be able to learn your baby's cues for when to start feeding.

Follow your baby's lead.

Make sure you are both comfortable and follow your baby's lead after he or she is latched on well. Some babies take both breasts at each feeding. Other babies only take one breast at a feeding. Help your baby finish the first breast, as long as he or she is still sucking and swallowing. This will ensure the baby gets the "hind" milk – the fattier milk at the end of a feeding. Your baby will let go of the breast when he or she is finished and often falls asleep. Offer the other breast if he or she seems to want more.

Keep your baby close to you.

Remember that your baby is not used to this new world and needs to be held very close to his or her mother. Being skin-to-skin helps babies cry less and stabilizes the baby's heart and breathing rates.

Avoid nipple confusion.

Do not use pacifiers, bottles, and supplements of infant formula in the first few weeks unless there is a medical reason to do so. If supplementation is needed, try to give expressed breast milk first. But it is best just to feed at the breast. This will help you make milk and keep your baby from getting confused while learning to breastfeed.

Sleep safely and close by.

Have your baby sleep in a crib or bassinet in your room so that you can breastfeed more easily at night.

Know when to wake the baby.

In the early weeks after birth, you should wake your baby to feed if 4 hours have passed since the beginning of the last feeding. Some tips for waking the baby include:

- Changing your baby's diaper
- Placing your baby skin to skin
- Massaging your baby's back, abdomen, and legs

If your baby is falling asleep at the breast during most feedings, talk to the baby's doctor about a weight check.

How to Know Your Baby Is Getting Enough Milk

Many babies, but not all, lose a small amount of weight in the first days after birth. Your baby's doctor will check his or her weight at your first visit after you leave the hospital. Make sure to visit your baby's doctor within three to five days after birth and then again at two to three weeks of age for checkups.

You can tell if your baby is getting plenty of milk if he or she is mostly content and gaining weight steadily after the first week of age. From birth to three months, typical weight gain is 2/3 to 1 ounce each day.

Other signs that your baby is getting plenty of milk:

- He or she is passing enough clear or pale yellow urine, and it is not deep yellow or orange.
- He or she has enough bowel movements
- He or she switches between short sleeping periods and wakeful, alert periods.
- He or she is satisfied and content after feedings.
- Your breasts feel softer after you feed your baby.

How much do babies typically eat?

A newborn's tummy is very small, especially in the early days. Once breastfeeding is established, exclusively breastfed babies from 1 to 6 months of age take in between 19 and 30 ounces per day. If you breastfeed 8 times per day, the baby would eat around 3 ounces per feeding. Older babies will take less breast milk as other food is introduced. Every baby is different, though.

At birth, the baby's stomach can comfortably digest what would fit in a hazelnut (about 1-2 teaspoons). In the first week, the baby's stomach grows to hold about 2 ounces or what would fit in a walnut. Talk to your baby's doctor if you are worried that your baby is not eating enough.

Does my baby need cereal or water?

Your baby only needs breast milk for the first six months of life. Breast milk alone will provide all the nutrition your baby needs. Giving the baby cereal may cause your baby

to not want as much breast milk. This will decrease your milk supply. Even in hot climates, breastfed infants do not need water or juice.

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Minimum Number of wet diapers and bowel movements in a day It is fine if your baby has more. 1 day = 24 hours			
Baby’s Age	Wet diapers	Number of Bowel Movements	Color and Texture of Bowel Movements
Day 1 (First 24 hours after birth)	1	The first one usually occurs within 8 hours after birth	Thick, tarry and black
Day 2	2	3	Thick, tarry and black
Day 3	5-6	3	Looser greenish to yellow (color may vary)
Day 4	6	3	Yellow, soft and watery
Day 5	6	3	Loose and seedy, yellow color
Day 6	6	3	Loose and seedy, yellow color
Day 7	6	3	Larger amounts of loose and seedy, yellow color

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on the [Hunger Cues](#) during Breastfeeding.

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