

How to Know Your Baby is Getting Enough Milk

What to Expect

WET DIAPERS: Your baby may have only one or two wet diapers per day during the first day or two after birth. This will increase over the next 2-3 days. After day 4 a baby should have at least six really wet diapers per day (more if you use cloth diapers).

BOWEL MOVEMENTS: Babies pass meconium, the greenish-black, tarry first stool, over the first day or two. By the third day, the colour changes to a greenish

transitional stool. By the fifth day, babies begin having at least three to five bowel movements per day, each at least the size of a \$2 coin (2.5 cm). The stools will typically be very loose and bright yellow in colour, often with a seedy appearance. Babies tend to have less frequent but larger bowel movements after five weeks of age.

BABY'S WEIGHT: Normally a baby loses up to seven percent of birth weight during the first three or four days. Once your milk supply becomes more plentiful,

usually on the third or fourth day, expect your baby to begin gaining weight. He should regain his birth weight by the time he is 10 to 14 days old. After that, most breastfed babies gain an average of five to eight ounces (200 grams) per week or one-and-a-half to two pounds (900 grams) a month for the first four months. The weight gains suggested here are averages; some babies who are feeding well will gain more, some less. If your baby is gaining less than the average, discuss ways to optimize milk transfer (with a La Leche League Leader or

lactation consultant) before considering supplementation with formula. See *Amazing Milk (Information Sheet #410) for more reasons to avoid the risks.*

FREQUENT FEEDINGS: Babies breastfeed frequently—often every one-and-a-half to three hours, timed from the start of one feed to start of the next—with an average of eight to twelve feeds in 24 hours. Frequent breastfeeding in the early days helps to establish your milk supply.

Some babies cluster nurse, which means they nurse very often for a few hours and then sleep for several hours. Feedings are not always spaced at regular intervals.

A good milk supply is established by following your baby's feeding cues, not scheduling feedings. Cues may include licking lips, restlessness, rooting (turning head towards breast) or mouthing hands. Crying is considered a late hunger cue.

A baby who is getting enough milk looks healthy: his colour is good, his skin is firm, and he is filling out and growing in length and head circumference. He is alert and active.

For more information on establishing or increasing your milk supply, see LLLC Information Sheet #469, Establishing Your Milk Supply.

False Alarms

Mothers sometimes think they do not have enough milk for their babies or that their babies are not getting enough milk, when they are, in fact, getting plenty. Some common false alarms:

- Breasts suddenly appear to be soft. This happens to almost all mothers once the initial feeling of fullness subsides. It does not mean you are producing insufficient milk; it simply means that your production has adjusted to your baby's needs.
- Breasts no longer leak between feedings. This is



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another sign that your milk supply is in tune with your baby's needs. Some mothers continue to leak even after the early months; others seldom leak. Leaking is not related to how much milk you are producing.

- Your baby seems fussy. Many babies have a fussy time every day that is not related to hunger. You will learn what works to comfort your baby; some babies need lots of stimulation and activity, others need soothing and gentleness. If your fussy baby settles down when you offer him the breast, it is a sign that he is comforted by nursing, rather than not getting enough to eat. Breastfeeding each time your baby cues helps meet the baby's needs and maintains a good milk supply.
- Your baby suddenly wants to nurse more often or seems hungry again soon after being fed. Babies go through several "growth spurts" during the first 3 months (at approximately 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 3 months of age). At these times they seem to want to nurse all the time for a few days. It is believed that this is one way babies increase mothers' milk supply to meet their needs.

- Your baby suddenly decreases his nursing time, perhaps down to five minutes or so at each breast. As babies get older, they can become very efficient at removing the milk from the breast. This is a positive sign that breastfeeding is going well, not something to worry about, so long as your baby is gaining weight in the normal range.

Babies are born to breastfeed, and a woman's body is designed to provide milk for her baby. Occasionally, because of health problems or other complications, a baby does not show all the signs of a good weight gain. The baby should be checked by a doctor and may need to be weighed frequently. The mother can carefully watch her baby's feeding patterns and behaviour to ensure he is feeding effectively and getting enough milk. If you have concerns about your milk supply or how your baby is doing, seek out help. Every mother knows her own baby better than anyone else, and can often notice a subtle change. Whether or not a problem is developing, a La Leche League Canada Leader can provide you with the information, support and encouragement you need to breastfeed your baby. Find out more at www.LLCC.ca.

Signs That Your Baby Is Getting Plenty Of Milk

Age of Baby	Wet Diapers per 24 hrs	Bowel Movements / 24 hrs	Weight
1-2 days	1-2	Expelling meconium	Normal loss
3-5 days	increasing to 3-6	At least 3 greenish, transitional stools	Stabilizing
6+ days	6+*	At least 3-5, the size of a \$2 coin	Gaining (25-35 g/day)
14 days	6+*	At least 3-5	Back to birth weight (may happen earlier)
6 weeks	6+*	Some babies change to less frequent, but larger, bowel movements	Gaining 150-230 g (5-8 oz.) per week

* more (6-8) if using cloth

For breastfeeding support contact: 1-800-665-4324 or

This document has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario and the support of the Best Start Resource Centre at Health Nexus. The information herein reflects the views of the authors and is not officially endorsed by the Government of Ontario or the Best Start Resource Centre.



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No. 457 – 2016