

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 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 may tend to have less frequent but larger bowel movements after five weeks of age.

Baby's Weight: When breastfeeding is going well, a baby loses, on average, between 5% and 7% of birth weight during the first three or four days, depending on the type of birth. Babies born by c-section lose more weight compared to babies born vaginally, on average. Also, babies born by mothers who received IV fluids within the final 2 hours before birth lose more weight, on average, than babies of mothers who do not receive such fluids. It is within the range of normal for babies who lose between 8% and 10% of birth weight but breastfeeding should be evaluated.

Once your milk supply becomes more plentiful, usually on the third or fourth day, expect your baby to begin gaining weight. Babies should regain their birth weights by the time they are 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, you can discuss ways to optimize milk transfer with a La Leche League Leader or lactation consultant (IBCLC), such as improving the latch, increasing your milk supply and having the baby evaluated for the possibility of a tongue tie, before considering supplementation.

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. Baby may feed for a shorter time on the first side and longer on the second or the other way around. Even if your baby seems finished, it is important to offer both breasts at each feeding.

Some babies cluster feed, which means they nurse very often for a few hours and then sleep for several hours. Feedings are not usually 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 a late hunger cue.

A Few Other Helpful Signs

After a few seconds of rapid sucking, when the milk starts flowing you might be able to hear regular swallowing, indicated by the breath after each swallow, which sounds like a "kah" sound or a puff of air (about one swallow every second). After feeding, baby seems content, relaxed and satisfied. Baby also has a few alert, active, content periods during the day of several minutes or more.



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False Alarms

Parents 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 frequently happens 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 another sign that your milk supply is in tune with your baby's needs. Some may 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 the breast, it is a sign that they are 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. This is one way babies increase the milk supplies to meet their needs.

- The time your baby spends nursing suddenly decreases, perhaps down to five minutes or so at each breast. As babies get older, they can become very efficient at removing milk. This is a positive sign that breastfeeding is going well, as long as your baby is gaining weight in the expected range.

Occasionally, because of health problems or other complications, a baby does not show all the signs of appropriate weight gain. The baby should be checked by a doctor, midwife or nurse and may need to be weighed frequently. The mother can carefully watch her baby's feeding patterns and behaviour to ensure your baby is feeding effectively and getting enough milk. If you have concerns about your milk supply or how your baby is doing, seek out help. Parents often notice subtle changes that others may not. La Leche League Canada Leaders can provide you with the information, support and encouragement you need to meet your infant feeding goals.. 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 20 - 35g /day (2/3 - 1 1/4 oz/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 regularly 140 - 245g/week (4 2/3 - 8 3/4 oz/week)

