

How to Know Your Breastfed 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 two to three days. After day 4, a baby should have at least five to 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, and 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). These 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.



WEIGHT LOSS: Your baby may lose 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 six ounces (170 grams) per week or a pound and a half (680 grams) per month for the first four months.

FREQUENT FEEDINGS: Babies breastfeed frequently—often every one-and-a-half to three hours, timed from

the start of one feed to the 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, he is filling out and growing in length and head circumference, and he is alert and active.

For more information on establishing or increasing your milk supply, see LLLC leaflet #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 false alarms that worry mothers include:

- 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 supply has adjusted to your baby's needs.
- Breasts no longer leak between feedings. This is another indication 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.



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- 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 being 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 three 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.
- 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, as 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 Baby Is Getting Plenty of Milk

Age of baby	Wet diapers per 24 hr	Bowel movements per 24 hr	Weight
1-2 days	1-2	Expelling meconium	Normal loss
3-5 days	Increasing to 5-6*	At least 3 greenish, transitional stools	Stabilizing
6+ days	5-6*	At least 3-5, the size of a \$2 coin	Gaining 115-200 g (4-7 oz) per week
14 days	5-6*	At least 3-5	Back to birth weight (may happen earlier)
6 weeks	5-6*	Some babies change to less frequent, but larger, bowel movements	Gaining 115-200 g (4-7 oz) per week

*more (6-8) if using cloth

For breastfeeding support contact:



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