

What to Expect the First Week

Many newborns sleep a lot during the first days after birth. A sleepy baby doesn't necessarily mean that the baby doesn't need to eat, just as crying should not always be interpreted as hunger. To ensure adequate intake and promote sufficient milk supply, the baby should be encouraged to eat every two to three hours during the day and evening. If he/she is feeding well and regularly during the day and evening, let the baby wake you for feedings during the night.

During the day, if the infant has slept three consecutive hours, try to wake the infant for feedings. Helpful waking techniques are un-swaddling, changing the diaper, sitting the infant in an upright position, massaging the back, putting a cool damp cloth on the infant's face, etc. Continue waking techniques until the infant is alert.

Signs of hunger: tight fists, drawing hands into mouth, rooting, sucking on fists, unsatisfied with other consoling techniques. The last sign of hunger is crying. Responding to the early signs will promote a more relaxed feeding and a milk supply that meets the infant's nutritional needs.

Signs of good latch on: mouth open wide before latch on; once positioned, mouth should still have a wide angle from the side view – lips should not look pursed. Infant's nose and chin should be touching the mother's breast; about 1½ inch of the areola (dark part of the nipple/breast) should be in the infant's mouth. The infant's cheek should not dimple when he/she sucks and the jaws should make long regular movements.

Signs of milk transfer from breast to infant: regular sucking pattern of long jaw movement burst of 10-20 sucks with brief pauses. As your milk becomes more plentiful you will hear the pattern of suck/swallow as one to two sucks per swallow. Feedings should last 10 to 20 minutes per breast. If the infant has fallen asleep after less than 10 minutes on the first breast, take the infant off the breast, awaken again and attempt to feed again on the same breast. Physically stimulating the baby may be necessary to keep the infant awake during that feeding. The more quality suckling the infant does at each feeding the more milk he/she will receive. During the feeding the mother may experience sleepiness, thirst, abdominal cramping and an increase in vaginal bleeding.

After the mature milk is in (postpartum day two to five) and the infant feeds for the recommended eight to 12 times per day, the infant should be wetting the diaper six to eight times each 24 hours. The stool should change from black to green, then to loose, seedy mustard yellow by the third to fourth day. Many babies have several stools per day.

Call your health care provider if...

Before the milk is in, if the baby goes six to 10 hours without feeding well, has less than two to four wet diapers and less than one to three bowel movements in a 24-hr period or amber urine.

After the milk is in, if the baby has less than six to eight wet diapers and less than one to three stools in 24 hours.