



Dinner is Served...and Served  
and Served and Served!!!  
Feeding Your Newborn 101

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Your precious bundle of joy is squirming, smacking her lips, and moving her head from side-to-side. While pediatricians strongly recommend breastfeeding, you are beginning to feel like a walking, talking human pacifier. She can't possibly be hungry already! If your newborn is bottle fed, the chore of washing, sterilizing, choosing bottles, nipples, and the right formula is making your head swim. It seems like feeding your newborn is all you accomplish.

Feeding a newborn can be an overwhelming, exhausting, and confusing experience. The job requires a great deal of time and energy. Be patient and remember that each feeding will get easier for both parent and child as the newborn becomes proficient at this task of eating. Newborns get plenty of practice eating. Most eat every 2-3 hours and at least 8 times in a 24-hour period. Breastfed babies may eat more often than formula-fed babies because breast milk is easily digested. A newborn should not go more than 4 hours between feedings.

Here are some commonly asked questions about feeding a newborn:

1. *How do I know when to feed my newborn?*

Newborns should not be on a strict feeding schedule, but should be fed "on demand." Learn to recognize hunger cues from your baby. These may include: squirming, lip smacking, opening her mouth, rooting (turning her head side-to-side toward a touch), or moving her hands to her mouth. Some newborns are too sleepy to cry for hunger. Watch your baby and not the clock. Learn to recognize the cues your newborn gives when she is hungry. Try to feed your baby before she is frantic from hunger.

2. *How do I feed a sleepy baby?*

It can be very frustrating to feed a sleepy newborn. Premies can be especially sleepy during feedings. A diaper change or un-wrapping a baby can help wake them. Gently rubbing the soles of the baby's feet, or rubbing the baby's back at the shoulder blades can also help wake a baby. Undress your baby down to her diaper and hold her against your bare skin. Skin-to-skin contact helps remind the baby that it is time to eat.

3. *Why does my baby take so long to eat*

In the early days of a newborn's life, they are learning how to become more proficient eaters. Most newborns get their fill in 10 to 15 minutes, but some babies can really stretch out meal time! Eating is hard work for most newborns. They may get sleepy after sucking for just a short time. A diaper change in the middle of a feeding will help wake the baby and hopefully remind her to get back to business.

4. *How and when should I burp my newborn?*

If you notice that your baby is distracted during a feeding, she may need to pause and burp. Sometimes your baby may appear uncomfortable following a feeding. She may have a gas bubble that needs to be brought up. As newborns suck, they swallow some air. You can burp your newborn by resting her up on your shoulder and gently rubbing and patting her back, or you can sit them up in your lap with her chin and neck supported.

5. *Why does my baby spit up and should I be concerned about it?*

Almost all babies spit up. Newborns are still learning how to eat, and they may overeat and overflow! As they eat, they take in air that can cause them to spit up. Their digestive systems are not fully developed and that can be a cause for spit up as well. Burp your baby following a feeding, and try not to jostle your baby after they have eaten. This will help keep spitting up to a minimum. When a baby vomits, it is more forceful and a greater amount. If you are concerned that your baby is vomiting, call your pediatrician.

6. *How do I know if my baby is getting enough to eat?*

If your baby is sucking well, appears content after feeding, and has 6-8 wet diapers every day, she is probably getting enough nourishment. Call your pediatrician's office if you are unsure that your baby is gaining weight properly. Going in to the pediatrician's office for a weight check can help calm worries about your baby's growth.

When my fourth baby came along, she had three older brothers to contend with. As I sat and nursed her in the very pink nursery, we were often surrounded by three screaming boys, chasing each other around the rocking chair. I actually savored the nighttime feedings with her in the dark stillness of her room. Each feeding with your newborn is an opportunity to bond. Talk to your baby, sing to your baby, and hold her close. They grow up very fast.

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