



# Breastfeeding Your Baby

## How to tell if your baby is getting enough milk

Your health care team at Kaiser Permanente recommends that you feed your baby only breast milk for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding is the natural way to provide all the nutrition your baby needs. It works on a supply-and-demand basis: the more your baby nurses, the more milk you will produce. Most nursing mothers can produce enough milk for their babies to thrive! You may hear different messages about how to breastfeed your baby, but remember there is no right or wrong way. It may take some time for your body to get into a rhythm, so be patient and persistent. Breastfeeding is a learned skill. It takes practice!

All through pregnancy, your breasts are making the “first milk,” called “colostrum.” Colostrum is present in small quantities, and is the perfect first food for your baby. It is rich in antibodies that help protect your baby from infections. Your “mature milk” comes in a few days later.

Many new mothers worry whether their babies are getting enough milk. Make sure you look for signs of hunger in your baby such as moving the tongue and lips, opening the mouth, turning the head from side to side, and general fussiness.

### How can I tell if my baby is getting enough milk?

There are many ways to tell if your baby is getting enough milk. Your baby is getting enough milk if:

- **Your baby is nursing at least 8-12 times in each 24-hour period.** Nursing often is normal and it does not mean that you do not have enough milk. The baby’s tiny stomach (about the size of a walnut) empties quickly and needs to be refilled often. As babies get older, they nurse more efficiently and less often, partly because their stomachs can hold more milk at each feeding.
- **Your baby has 3 or more wet diapers every 24 hours by the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of life.** This can be hard to tell if you are using disposable diapers that keep wetness away from the baby’s skin. You may want to line the diaper with a facial tissue. If the tissue is wet at the next diaper change, you’ll know some urine has passed. (This should not be done if your baby has been circumcised because the tissue will stick to the circumcision.)
- **The baby’s stools will be turning yellowish by the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of life.** He or she should have a minimum of 3 to 4 loose, yellow stools every 24 hours from about the 4th day of life through 6 weeks of age.
- **You hear gulping and swallowing sounds during breastfeeding.** Your baby’s cheeks should be round and you should hear swallowing sounds after every 1 to 3 sucking movements. If you hear a “clicking” sound or if the baby’s cheeks are puckered, the baby will need to be taken off your nipple and latched on again. If you don’t think that your baby is latched on well after several attempts, or if you have painful, sore nipples, call your lactation consultant or healthcare professional.
- **Your breasts feel fuller before feedings.** After each feeding, they should feel softer. You may notice milk drippings from the opposite breast while you are nursing.

- **Your baby looks relaxed and drowsy after a feeding.** Babies are often fussy just before a feeding. Place your baby skin-to-skin on your uncovered chest in an upright position if your baby is fussy. Singing or talking to your baby can help calm him or her. Baby may start to move into feeding position. After the baby nurses, he or she is usually satisfied. If your baby is still fussy after a feeding, try burping the baby and then place him or her skin to skin again. Some babies have a fussy period each day. This may be caused by many things and may not be related to your milk supply at all.
- **Your baby is gradually gaining weight.** The average weight gain for the first 3 to 4 months of life is 4 to 8 ounces per week, or 1 to 2 pounds per month. This should be measured from your baby's lowest weight after birth. From 4 to 6 months, the average weight gain is 3 to 5 ounces per week. From 6 to 12 months, the average weight gain is 1 ½ to 3 ounces per week.
- **Your baby has brief active periods.** Your baby will be alert and active with good muscle tone.

All breastfed babies should be seen by a healthcare professional between 2 to 4 days of age to check for signs of successful breastfeeding. If you feel worried that your baby is not getting enough milk, please call your baby's pediatrician or lactation consultant and ask to be seen.

*Do not give your baby water, formula, or other fluids unless recommended by your baby's pediatrician or lactation consultant.*

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### Additional resources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics: **[aap.org](http://aap.org)**
- The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists: **[acog.org](http://acog.org)**
- La Leche League International: **[lalecheleague.org](http://lalecheleague.org)** or 24-hour Breastfeeding Helpline: 877-4-LALECHE
- Connect to our Web site at **[kp.org](http://kp.org)** to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- *The Nursing Mother's Companion* by Kathleen Huggins (Harvard Common Press, revised 2005).
- *Breastfeeding Pure & Simple* by Gwen Gotsch (La Leche League International, revised 2000).

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.