

Is My Baby Getting Enough Breastmilk?

Look for these four signs to tell if Baby is full. By Kimberly Tchang and Laura Flynn McCarthy
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It's one of the most common questions among new breastfeeding moms: Is my baby getting enough breast milk? Since you can't actually see the milk your body is producing, it's hard to know exactly how much your newborn is drinking.

The good news? Most women *do* produce enough milk to nurse their babies successfully; it's estimated that only approximately 5 percent to 15 percent of all breastfeeding mothers truly have low milk supply. Still, it's important to be 100% sure he's getting enough. Read on for some surefire signs that your baby is thriving. You'll also learn about issues that can interfere with your milk supply and tips on what to do if you think there may be a problem.

Breast Milk Production

For the first few days after delivery, you're producing a superconcentrate called colostrum. Even though it's not high in volume, it's packed with good nutrition like fats and protein. These promote your baby's growth and contain protective antibodies. Colostrum is also very easy to digest, which allows Baby to get the hang of feeding. Your real breast milk will come around the third or fourth day after birth, and it will look whiter and more liquidy than the colostrum.

Is My Baby Getting Enough Milk?

Here are four signs that your baby is getting enough breast milk.

1. He's swallowing. When your baby first latches onto your breast, he will suck rapidly, which helps release the milk. Then he should progress into a deep, slow pulling motion as he swallows; you may not only feel this motion, but also see his jaw drop down and hear him as he does this. If your baby isn't getting enough milk, you may see him sucking rapidly but not swallowing slowly and rhythmically; he may also take long pauses while nursing or repeatedly fall asleep at your breast.

2. He's satisfied. If your baby seems content and well fed after feeding sessions, all is likely going well. But a baby who appears overly lethargic—or, conversely, who is constantly screaming for food—may not be getting enough milk. "If a baby has many feedings that last longer than an hour or wants to nurse very often, with less than an hour between feedings, there may be a problem," says Susan Burger, M.H.S., Ph.D., I.B.C.L.C., a lactation consultant with New York-based Lactescence in the City.

3. He fills his diapers. Your baby's diaper output is a reliable indicator that he's getting enough milk. Most breastfed infants wet six to 10 – and soil at least three – diapers per day in the first month. Stool color is also important: While the first bowel movements are typically black and sticky, they should be green by day three or four and yellow by day four or five. The consistency of the stools should also be seedy or watery.

4. He's gaining weight. It's normal for your baby's weight to fluctuate in the first days or week of life. A newborn may lose about 5-7 percent of weight by his third or fourth day and be perfectly fine, but if he has a weight loss of 10 percent or more, there could be a problem. By day 10, your baby should rebound to his birth weight.

If you suspect you aren't making enough milk or your baby isn't gaining weight properly, call your doctor and a lactation consultant right away. You may have a problem like a thyroid or breast-duct dysfunction. Alternately, your baby could have an infection or a weak sucking reflex that needs to be addressed. It's possible you'll need to use a supplementer. This device, which you fill with breast milk or formula, has a tiny tube that runs along the breast to the nipple, allowing the baby to drink from the supplementer and the breast simultaneously.

• **By Kimberly Tchang and Laura Flynn McCarthy**